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Empowerment through place : the chapel at Concord Academy as participatory architecture, education, & experience.

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EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PLACE: THE CHAPEL AT CONCORD ACADEMY AS PARTICIPATORY ARCHITECTURE, EDUCATION, & EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation Presented

By

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For Noah and Adam,

Times Past, Present, and Future,

and the Chapel

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In addition, I wish to acknowledge photographers whose work appeared in a variety of C.A. publications and has been reprinted here. These include: Monika Anderson (p. 173); Gabriel Amadeus Cooney (pp. 87, 249, 333, 416, 417); Montague Everett (p. 64, 101, 166); Bradford F. Herzog (p. 102); Maria Lindberg (pp. 139, 208, 232, 246, 388); Keith Martin (p. 68, 163, 251); John Wald (pp. 90, 92, 354); Elizabeth West (p. 245); Elizabeth Wilcox (p. 72). Several other photographs from CA publications and archives have not specified the photographers, but I am also indebted to them. In addition, remaining photographs not cited above are my own.

I am deeply indebted to the participants of this study for their generosity and good will. Rather than mention each of them here by name, I prefer to weave my appreciation of them into the body of this work, as part of the story that unfolds.

ABSTRACT

**EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PLACE:
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MAY 1996

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This critical case study explores multiple meanings of a small chapel at Concord Academy, a private secondary school in Massachusetts. The relationship between participation and empowerment is explored, as revealed through the chapel and as understood, experienced, and articulated by people involved with the chapel over time. Architecture is considered as a vehicle for democracy — an opportunity for risk, interaction, community, and encounter.

Found abandoned in the 1950s, the chapel was rescued by Concord Academy women, girls, and a few men who took the building down, reassembled and refurbished it at Concord, and built huge architectural carvings, pulpit, altar, and steeple. Seniors and faculty soon addressed the school in morning "chapels," which evolved into a "central rite of passage" for students — pivotal, powerful "Who am I?" experiences described as "saying hello to adulthood and good-bye to childhood."

The chapel is explored as building project, rite of passage, evolving drama, and forum for community. Questions include what is empowerment and what makes environments empowering, experientially, pedagogically, institutionally and architecturally? What does the chapel mean to those those who know and use it?

Issues include: the relationship between individuality and community; what makes places meaningful; the chapel in relation to women; finding and speaking one's own voice;

the separation of learning from doing; and intersections of gender, class, race and sexual orientation. Empowerment is considered both as individual self-confidence and efficacy and sociopolitical consciousness and intervention.

This study also explores alternative, participatory ways of conducting research and writing a dissertation — more a weaving of stories and an evolving saga than a removed, academic treatise. For me this has been an odyssey, challenging and inviting us to be engaged as full human beings, not just thinkers.

Qualitative, ethnographic, phenomenological, and participatory, this study uses interview/dialogues, participation, photography, and interaction as opportunities for participants' increasing involvement, control, and appropriation. The project should interest the public, educators, architects, environmental designers, historians, anthropologists, community activists, and participatory/action researchers.

This study is not simply rational. I hope my heart, C.A.'s heart, and the rhythm of the chapel's steady pulse come through.

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INTRODUCTION: PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT, AND ARCHITECTURE

"I looked up the road I was going and back the way I come, and since I wasn't satisfied, I decided to step off the road and cut me a new path."
— Maya Angelou, 1993

Coming from the Inside Out

Before launching into the study proper, let me acquaint you, the reader, with my approach. Wanting to come from the inside out in this study, I want to immerse you as much as I can in the heart of the study, sharing with you some of what it was like to experience this place, the chapel at Concord Academy (C.A.). I want to share the chapel's players and the rich encounters I had with them, from early chapel movers, rebuilders, and carvers, to tellers of tales, to renegades, to quiet seekers of solace. Students, faculty, and administrators from over the years tell their own stories, in their own words — people who have been touched in one way or another by the chapel and have touched the chapel back. I want to give you the taste and flavor of the chapel's multiple, evolving, and abiding meanings and uses. For me this has been an odyssey — a privileged entry into the private recesses of people's lives, an unexpected series of heart-felt, powerfully moving encounters, and an ongoing evolution of ideas and understandings. I want to bring you as close to those as I can.

To that end, in this paper I offer you a combination of detailed descriptions (both verbal and visual), and direct excerpts from interviews to create a weaving in and out of narratives about the chapel and what it has meant to people on personal, school, and community-wide levels. People speak of trials and triumphs, large and small, of risk and rescue, of comfort and disquiet. They describe individual responses to the chapel, what it

represents, and what transpires there. Reactions can range from misgivings in one person, to delight in another, to whispered awe in a third, or calm assurance in a fourth. All these and more are part of the story.

The journey that this dissertation asks you to embark upon is not linear, strictly analytic, or reductionist. Rather, it ebbs and flows like a tide rushing up onto the shore, then slipping back into the sea, only to surge forward again, reworking and rearranging the same sand washed smooth moments before.

This is the story of a building and its evolution through time, its layers of meaning, its complexities, its conflicts, its wonderful resilience. The stories people tell about their experiences with the chapel are like the succession of waves rolling up onto the shore. The meanings evoked are like the rumble of the sea, building into one wave after another, echoing each other, even as they build, each one, to a distinctive roar that signals that particular tumble and roll, that magical moment when water and land intersect. In this case the waves are individuals and the school as a whole coming together in and through the chapel — meeting — and in an instant bringing everything powerfully into focus. The meanings people make out of the chapel, moving through time and filtered through each one's own particular set of experiences and perspectives, combine to leave us with a sense of what abides and what keeps on moving, as change itself becomes a pivotal part of the whole story.

So if, in telling the chapel's story, I seem to retrace my steps at times, or to rush forward, only to retreat and begin again, think of the story as the waves washing in upon the shore, working and reworking the surface. The whole becomes more understandable and alive when seen as reoccuring, folding back on itself, ebbing and flowing — voices through time, perspectives sometimes crashing up against each other, and at other times rolling together, smooth and frictionless. I want to convey the steady beat and underlying rhythm, at the same time as recognizing the dissonance — two parts of the same whole.

This dissertation also grapples with ideas and issues, revealed through people's stories, overlaying and intertwining with them. The path folding back on itself happens quite naturally as the chapel is viewed through a series of lenses, from the lense of gender to that of place-making, to questions of ownership and entitlement, to multiple issues surrounding empowerment and power. These, too, weave in and out of the telling, cycling back on themselves, so much do they have to do with one another and with the chapel. So the reader should be forewarned that this paper does not proceed neatly from "A" to "B." It takes the same kinds of twists and turns that experience offers us, with all its messy unpredictability and complexity. I hope it becomes more real and rich for the reader because of that.

I have not left my own voice or my own feelings out of this study, either. I do not speak as an anonymous third person. So do not be surprised when I include in this story what is happening to me as well in this process — both in the encounters I had with people and the chapel as I carried out this work and in my experience of writing this paper. Nor have I left out the evolving relationships that grew out of this study — the ways participants grew more comfortable and engaged as the research progressed, the increasing ownership some felt, and how more and more this became not just my study, but something other people had a stake in too. I want to show you how the process evolved and how small steps welcoming engagement and participation grew and built one on the other. I think of this dissertation as ours now, not just mine.

I also want to alert you that my approach to reviewing relevant literature departs from usual dissertation practices. In the interest of immersing both of us in the actual setting, rather than preface the project description with a detailed literature review, I weave references to the literature throughout the story of the chapel and its various dimensions. In this way I hope that the literature and others' efforts and concepts will be seen in terms of their relevance for this project and will emerge from a consideration of lived

experience, building on, amplifying, unravelling, and helping to create multiple meanings and insights.

Readers who skip the actual writing in this work, going directly from the abstract to the end will have missed the whole point. It is not arriving at some final destination that matters here, but what happens along the way. Think of this as Marco Polo-like, where getting there is half the fun, rather than the instant, disassociated, cerebral beaming up of space teleportation, with only a beginning and an end, but nothing in between. My approach means that the descriptive and analytic sections of the work form the bulk of the study as a whole. I invite you to engage them as you would a new country you are exploring or a friend you want to come to know better and better. If the work as a whole can suggest and illustrate some ways of conducting, documenting, and sharing research that are more inclusive and participatory than usual, so much the better.

In keeping with the spirit of the chapel and my entire intent, this paper unravels as a multi-layered story. I hope that the result will be engaging and thought-provoking for the reader. If I start the story well after the earliest historical events and make my way both backwards and forward in time, it is in deference to participants, so many of whom started this way in sharing their stories and the chapel's story with me. I hope you enjoy the journey.

Overview and Organization of the Dissertation

This paper begins by introducing the topic of participation and architecture, explaining the questions to be explored and setting them in context. My focus on empowerment is discussed and explained in light of parallel efforts in architecture, education, planning, and development. Contemporary architecture is treated critically here, for its aversion to sociopolitical conscience and concern. Furthermore, the reader is challenged to consider that participation in architecture or elsewhere is no guarantee of

fairness, democracy, or popular control. Participation comes in many guises and accommodates a variety of purposes, the least common of which may be empowerment.

This first chapter is followed by a methodology section that outlines the methods used in the study, explains their rationale, and describes their particular application here. Considerable attention is given to qualitive and participatory research, as many of their goals, intentions, and assumptions underpin this study. This section also describes the layering of methods and techniques that combine to make this effort multi-facetted, interactive, and narrative.

Next comes a description of the actual case being explored here, including why I chose this setting, what the setting is like physically in immediate tactile and visual experience, what its basic history has been, and who the cast of characters are. These introductions setting the stage are found in Chapters 1 through 3.

The next chapters describe the case in detail using a series of lenses and organizing concepts. First comes Chapter 4, "The Chapel's Meanings and the Chapel in Action," an historical review of how the chapel has been used over time, what people say it means to them, and how uses and meanings intertwine. Here we see the chapel evolve from an early dismantling and restoration project to a pivotal community forum for personal disclosure and self-definition. We hear directly from the early movers and carvers, from some long term faculty members who have witnessed several decades of the chapel and its transformations, and from a variety of students, faculty, and administrators who have arrived more recently. This chapter tries to immerse us in the chapel as evolving experience.

Chapter 5, "The Power of Place," follows. Here the concept of "place" is developed, its components are broken down, and a specific framework for dealing with place is explored in terms of the chapel. Through "place," architecture is seen as the intersection of people and space, where actions, values, and meanings are intimately intertwined and evolve over time. Memory, history, culture, protection, and preservation

combine with a sense of ownership and ongoing narrative to ground the chapel and underscore it as a place of abiding meaning for Concord Academy. If the reader felt overwhelmed by this paper's length or weight of description and analysis, this might be a convenient chapter to read on its own as a respite.

An exploration of place leads directly to the issue of ownership. Whose chapel is it and how does ownership get established or subverted? Why does ownership matter? What is the relationship between ownership and a sense of entitlement? How does ownership relate to change and whether change is seen as a threat or an opportunity? These questions are explored in Chapter 6.

Then, in Chapter 7, I explore the chapel specifically in relation to women. Two parallel contexts are explored here: one is the giving and receiving of chapels as experiences — senior chapels, faculty chapels, or administrative chapels; the other is the adventure of the chapel having been dismantled and moved to Concord Academy, and having been reconstructed and refurbished. This includes a focus on subsequent carving and steeple-building projects and their special import for women. This chapter explores how the chapel experience exemplifies ways of knowing and being especially compatible with women, engendering a consideration of knowledge that is personal, connected, experiential, and passionate.

Chapter 8 focuses on the consciousness of and continued "presence" of women involved with the chapel's move and earliest days at C.A.. It asks how various players perceive the chapel project, especially in light of women's roles; and how lessons from the chapel experience show up for participants later in their own lives. The chapter discusses learning by doing, women breaking out of prescribed roles, and the importance of the early women as role models.

Chapter 9, "Narrative as Mode," explains why stories matter and how they can work to validate and empower diverse voices. This chapter explores the chapel as a ritual for the exchange of personal stories, with the power to open people up to each other and

to help create community. Stories are seen as individual self-expressions, as embedded in sociopolitical, historical context, and as potential catalysts for change.

Narrative is part of the story of empowerment, which follows in Chapters 10-12. Empowerment is unraveled in terms of a range of meanings and how comfortable or not people feel with it. Frameworks for thinking about power and empowerment are explained and applied to the chapel, with distinctions made between power to and power with as opposed to power over. Empowering environments are explored, too, not just empowering approaches. Chapels are considered in light of both personal power (Chapter 10) and sociopolitical consciousness and intervention (Chapter 11). Chapter 12 extends empowerment to include resistance, peak experience, and solitude, and explores how the chapel promotes these.

Finally Chapter 13 reveals my own immersion and involvement in the project, from giving a chapel myself to my thoughts and feelings about the unique odyssey and ongoing encounter that this whole project has been for me. This includes some critique of my own process and closes with suggestions for where to go from here.

The entire study wraps up with some reflection on where we have been, what the journey has entailed, and what issues and questions we still grapple with. This section hopes to leave you, the reader, with some sense of closure, but also with a challenge to continue this evolving inquiry in the same spirit of engagement and encounter we hope you have brought with you from the outset and have managed to sustain along the way.

I wish the reader well in launching forward from here. Somehow the text has been much longer than I ever intended. For anyone completely disheartened by the length, I would read the poem on page 387 and leave it at that. But for the more intrepid and determined, I hope that you, dear reader, will not be dissuaded from setting off on what might be an extended journey. I can't help but think of Jason Robards and Barbara Harris in the movie "A Thousand Clowns" (1965). They went down to the wharf to see a great cruise ship off, even though they didn't know any of the passengers personally.

With gusto and celebratory abandon they tossed confetti into the air, all the while yelling the very message and sentiments I hold for you, dear reader, whom I may not know or ever meet, but to whom my wishes and goodwill extend. Like Jason Robards and Barbara Harris, let me shout out to you, from all this distance in time and space, and with all my love, "Bon voyage, Charlie, have a wonderful time!"

My Focus: Architecture and Empowerment

I am interested in architecture and empowerment. How do architecture and empowerment intersect, interrelate, and either foster or frustrate each other? In particular, this study explores how participatory architecture might foster empowerment. By participatory architecture I mean architecture which invites interaction or direct participation of the users, either early on in the design and planning stage, later in the actual physical construction, or even further along during the use and the life of a building and its modification over time.

By participation I mean more than simply use. Participation involves a degree of control and manipulation that goes well beyond conventional building use. It puts people who are not professional builders or designers more centrally in the driver's seat in relationship to buildings. When intentionally linked to empowerment, participatory architecture can have an overtly liberating agenda and effect. A participatory building is far more than a neutral container or box. Participatory architecture resonates; it holds meaning; it engages people and matters to them. I want to know more about that. How does it work and what do people have to say about it? What makes places powerful for people? What makes people powerful in places?

The Problem

Architecture Ignores Participation and Empowerment

Participation and empowerment have been given a great deal of attention and gained considerable credence and momentum over the last two decades in fields as disparate as planning, education, management, community development, and government. Preoccupation with issues of empowerment and participation is a natural outgrowth of a concern for and belief in democracy. Generally, the more participatory something is the more it is presumed to be democratic. Democracy, in turn, is presumed to enhance individual freedom. Similarly, participation and empowerment agendas are often embraced as counters to oppression and have emerged in settings where privilege fosters constraint, injustice, or inequity, whether in "third" or "first" world contexts.

Curiously, in the rush of enthusiasm for participation, empowerment, and democracy in so many fields and throughout the world, architecture clings to traditional, autocratic, and exclusive methods and intentions. Architecture is most often anything but democratic and has seemed surprisingly untouched by the shifts toward democratic inclusion exhibited in its close affiliate and neighboring profession, city planning, where participation has been touted and even legislated (Arnstein, 1968; Burchell & Sternlieb, 1978; Fagence, 1977; Friedmann, 1973, 1978; Horowitz, 1967,1978; Hudson, 1979; Wandersman, 1979, 1981).

> Over the past two decades, while the planning profession has seen a significant shift toward community participation, architecture has, by and large, held to the model of a unified design where the architect is responsible for everything from the general concept down to the smallest detail. (Brower, 1990, p. 89)

Architecture seems equally untouched and even oblivious to the burgeoning concern with participation and empowerment in education (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1985, 1987; Giroux, 1983; Kindervatter, 1979; Shor, 1987, 1992; Stone, 1994; Wiggington, 1985) where issues of power and control are specifically unmasked to reveal in whose interest education functions (Apple, 1982, 1990; Carnoy, 1974; Ellsworth, 1989; Illich, 1970;

Livingstone, 1987; Weiler, 1988). Who controls and defines knowledge is shown as intimately connected to maintenance of the status quo, perpetuation of power differentials, and issues of hegemony.

Similarly, architecture has taken little notice of emerging interest in democratic management and worker participation and control (Ackoff, 1970; Bernstein, 1983; Blumberg, 1968; Emery & Trist, 1965, 1973; Lindenfeld & Rothschild-Whitt, 1982; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Rothschild & Whitt, 1986), where the frequently used term "workplace democracy" underscores the way in which this interest is congruent with democratic systems and values. Workplace democracy involves less hierarchic organizational structures and decision-making, increased levels of cooperation, decentralization, and more equitable sharing of wealth, power, and resources.

Similarly, a movement toward more democratic and inclusive values are reflected in development efforts (Escobar, 1995; Goulet, 1971, 1974, 1975; Guttierez, 1973; Kindervatter, 1979; Nerfin, 1977; Owens & Shaw, 1972; Seers, 1969, 1972; Sen & Grown, 1987), in religion (especially via liberation theology) (Ferm, 1986), and in grassroots community activism (Alinsky, 1969; Bezold, 1978; Freire, 1986; Speeter, 1978). Even psychology is moving in this direction through co-counseling, group therapy, self-help groups and narrative therapy, all developing approaches where "clients" become collaborative "counselors" for and with each other, actively participating in and taking charge of the direction and implementation of their own psychological development and therapy (Nicholas, 1984; White & Epston, 1990).

Others in psychology have explored participation, voice, and empowerment explicitly within the context of marginalized groups and communities (Miller, 1991; Surrey, 1991; Rappaport, 1984). Psychology has had a long-standing interest in people developing their capacities for independence, decision-making, and action — capacities often associated with personal maturation, individuation, and empowerment. Psychology focuses most often on individual growth and development, however, rather than on

groups or communities. To psychologists, empowerment can mean, principally, personal power. Feminist psychologists and those interested in community activism are notable exceptions.

In a variety of fields, from development, to business, to education, a concern for popular participation and/or for equity and empowerment has sometimes virtually transformed the field and prevailing practice, resulting in mandates for community involvement in planning; burgeoning models of democratic management; and important reconceptualizations and critiques of education and its norms and purposes. Where they have occurred, many of these efforts have been important spurs to help promote democracy and liberation.

While participation has been explored and touted in education, development, planning, and business, with a few notable exceptions, those espousing it have not extended the concept to the built environment — to the physical structures they live and work in. More often, the built environment is taken as a given, an existing fact, and is not even thought of as an opportunity for engagement, for community involvement, and for liberation. Architecture serves as nothing more than a static, uninvolved backdrop for efforts that may otherwise be entirely steeped in participation and empowerment. If particular buildings enhance or frustrate participation and empowerment, it is little noted and rarely considered. By the same token, architects, builders, and even clients are often oblivious to or unconcerned with the participatory or empowering opportunities of architecture. Nor are they attuned to how some buildings can reinforce domination and belie participation, empowerment, or democracy. It is not that these are never overt concerns in architecture, but they are rarely articulated in the field and when they are addressed, they are like a whirlpool trying to create a counterflow to an otherwise rushing tide that flows relentlessly in one direction, and one direction only.

Research Approaches Often Fall Short

Parallel with my concern about democracy in architecture is the dilemma of democracy, inclusion, and equity in research. It seems to me that research — especially academic research — falls into the same traps that too often ensnare architecture. The researcher is often remote from the setting, is in a singularly controlling position, and maintains a comfortable distance, intellectually, personally, and emotionally. The search is often for "objectivity". The process is usually singularly heady. The researcher collects "data", implying or presuming the possibility of disembodied fact, shorn of nuance or ambiguity, set loose from the messy complexities and contradictions of life, context, and multiplicity. Something called "truth" is presumed to lie mysteriouisly hidden beneath appearance and the researcher hopes to uncover and reveal it through meticulous and carefully considered inquiry.

Yet too often this process ends up with a product of questionable value to participants, asking questions of more interest to the researcher than to those in the setting, and producing answers useful and relevant mostly in purely academic or professional circles, in language quite specific to those circles and frequently inaccessible to almost everybody else. Like dominant architectural practice, prevailing research practice often excludes the general public from the process and decision-making, promotes elitism, supports a system where some are considered of more worth and merit than others, and widens the gulfs between people rather than building bridges.

Purpose

My interest and commitment is to equity and democracy, played out here in terms of architecture, academia, and research. As a researcher and writer, I want to avoid the traps of distance, intellectualism, claims to either aspire to or assume "objectivity", and the presumption of "ownership" over ideas, processes, or products. I want my work to be

embedded in the context and the participants, to welcome interaction and collaboration, to offer a counterpoint to the usual distant, disentangled intellectual pursuit, so that the research itself becomes more participatory, more inclusive, and more fully human. My challenge in this study is to try to do that and to grapple with the difficulties along the way. I hope the result will be a process that is itself more empowering for me and for those who participate with me in this work. Later in the study I describe some of the challenges involved and trace the development of this work in terms of increasing levels of participant involvement and control.

Similiarly, with architecture itself I am committed to equity and inclusion. I believe that architecture and participatory architecture, in particular, can be a powerful avenue for empowerment and an active agent in the transformation toward participatory democracy. This work examines some of the empowerment and disempowerment aspects of architecture and, in particular, of participatory architecture. In this dissertation I explore underlying theory or, at least, concepts helpful in understanding some of the characteristics and dynamics at play in participation, empowerment, and democracy as they intersect with architecture and place. I focus on one particular case of participatory architecture that has involved participation in various ways and that has held promise of involving empowerment as well. The question has been, what has this particular example of participatory architecture meant to people — people directly involved as active participants and people more indirectly involved. I take particular interest in the involvement of those without a professional architectural or construction background. The study tries to ferret out if and how empowerment was involved, how participation occurred and what the relationship has been between participation in its various guises and empowerment. I also deal more broadly with architectural meaning and place-making. What do buildings mean to people and what is the notion of place and place-making about? In particular what does this specific example seem to mean to people and why does it seem to mean what it does? What, in turn, do these meanings have to do

with participation, with empowerment and with the relationship between individuality and community?

Participation is often presumed to be empowering, ipso facto. I have explored when and how participation in one architectural case has been empowering, or what about it has been empowering, and when, how and why it may not be, or certainly is not always, empowering. This study necessarily entailed a more detailed examination of empowerment, participation, and meaning, and what is meant by those terms from the perspective of relevant literature, participants in the study, and myself. The study grapples with the relevance or importance of these terms and concepts and their relationship to each other.

Going further, the study looks to parallel fields where participation and empowerment have been of concern, to explore whether they might yield concepts or theories that are useful in understanding this particular architectural case and that are potentially useful to architecture in general. By the same token, this case is considered in terms of how it might lend insight and perspective to relevant concepts and theories in fields other than architecture. In addition, since this case explicitly involves women, girls, teenagers, and a school, special attention is given to some of the ways in which each of these aspects of the context makes a difference.

Background and Significance of the Study

Participation Goes Against the Mainstream

While certainly not the mainstream in architecture, there has been an important undercurrent concerned with participation and within that undercurrent, a smaller eddy preoccupied with empowerment. Yet, participatory architecture efforts have been little formalized or coherently conceptualized. People tend to practice out in the field with little or no reference to each other. Their efforts are often isolated and they operate largely

without the benefit of overarching theory or guiding conceptual frameworks. Relatively oblivious to each other in the field, they are even less aware of parallel efforts in other fields such as education, development planning, management, or psychology. Yet these fields might yield useful parallels and applicable theories, providing steps toward clarifying, unifying concepts that could shed important light on a fledgling architectural arena.

This is particularly important because participatory architecture is also beleaguered. It is by no means the mainstream thrust of architecture, but lingers on the margin as an uneasy stepchild. While architecture as a whole seeks to be apolitical, participatory architecture is often openly ideological. While mainstream architecture can be viewed as removed, aloof, and elitist, participatory architecture is engaged, colloquial, and egalitarian. It is often openly populist. While mainstream architecture is preoccupied with aesthetics, thinking itself amoral and focusing on the building as jewel, as singular and self-affirming product, participatory architecture is enmeshed in process, grappling overtly with moral and sociopolitical issues, and taking a moral stance. What happens in and around buildings, before, during, and after construction, what buildings mean to people, and who controls buildings, building processes, and architectural decisions are the heart of the matter for participatory architecture.

Critiquing Post-Modernism

When I say "mainstream" architecture here, I refer largely to "Post-Modernism" which for some years now has become increasingly pervasive and lauded, so much so that its values and ideology dominate the field, even while claiming to be apolitical and anti-ideological. Lest those familiar with the term "Post-Modernism" confuse the architectural use of the term with its use in other fields, I should explain that in architecture Post-Modernism has been associated with "deconstruction" largely in a visual sense. Post-Modern architects often break up the planes of buildings and seem to

whimsically manipulate architectural elements as if to visually break the rules of architecture, expectation, and gravity.

Architectural Post-Modernism seems to me to be architects playing at and with architecture, caught up in their own language, for their own purposes and egos. If there is any concern with social justice, equity, or inclusion in a larger societal sense, I cannot see it. Philosopher Jürgen Habarmas captures this nicely when he calls Post-Modernism "soulless container architecture" and "solitary arrogance", going on to condemn it as "an intellectually playful yet provocative repudiation of the moral principles of modern architecture" (Habermas, 1985, p. 318).

While certainly not the mainstream in modern architecture, nevertheless several important voices have risen along with Habermas to decry the seeming absence of social and moral conscience in predominant architectural practice (Habermas, 1985; Ockman et al., 1985; Sommer, 1983, 1987). They argue, among other things, that to ignore the social and power issues involved with architecture is to be increasingly out of touch with the issues of our times. Questions of who controls architectural decisions, and whose voices, values, and intentions are reflected in architecture are central. Most recently poststructuralist critiques deliberately unmasking the connections between architecture and hegemony have amplified and strengthened these arguments (Dutton, 1991; Ward, 1992, 1993).

Others have lambasted the socially malfunctional nature of much of modern architecture, intent on image, methods of construction and the latest building materials, and financing, rather than on how buildings work for the people who use them. Peter Blake, long-time editor of one of the most respected mainstream architectural journals, joined others in condemning modern architecture for being so out of touch with people when he wrote, Form Follows Fiasco in 1974. As sociologists, anthropologists, and environmental and social psychologists began to consider architecture, they found it all too often coming up short, so little did architects incorporate people's behavior and values into their

designs. That these condemnations come from critics with extensive mainstream credentials makes them all the more persuasive.

A Call for Inclusion & Equity

Still others have clamored for more democracy and inclusion in both architecture and planning, for more access to resources, and for more equity (Alexander, 1975, 1984, 1985; Knevitt & Wates, 1987; Turner, J., 1972, 1977; Ward, 1989, 1992). For these same authors and others (Banham, Cross, Markus, et al. in Cross, 1972; Schon, 1987) the search for a more socially responsible architecture suggests reconfiguring the role of the architect to become more of a facilitator or "enabler" who orchestrates and informs the creative efforts of non-professionals — be they individuals, families, user groups and organizations, or community members.

A few have linked the remote and hierarchical practice of architecture to so-called "first world" domination. They see the wholesale adoption of Western architectural styles, materials, and technologies as nothing short of architectural imperialism, with all the disabling dependency that term implies (Dethier, 1983; Nyerere, 1977). Their antidote is a reaffirmation of indigenous culture and building methods and materials (Dethier, 1983; Fathy, 1973).

Others have explored, documented, and promoted more inclusive and participatory efforts in architecture, working to forge an alternative vision and social change-oriented set of values for the field (Hatch, 1984; Kroll, 1980, 1984; Sommer, 1983, 1987; Turner, B., 1988; Turner, J., 1972, 1977). Participatory architecture has also been documented with a less overtly ideological intent, in an attempt to decipher who has been doing it and how and why, and to provide some sort of framework through which to understand these efforts (Lackney, 1988, 1989; Sanoff, 1989, 1990).

In a parallel vein, self-help and citizen-initiated efforts have sprung up, many without the formal involvement of architects, from the '60s and '70s domes, yurts, back-to-the-

land and owner builder efforts (Bear, 1966; Boericke & Shapiro, 1973; Kahn, 1968; Kern, 1972, 1976; Van der Ryn, 1972; van der Zee, 1971; Wamplar, 1977), to the more recent popularity of cohousing and co-design (King, Conley, Latimer, & Ferrari, 1989; McCamant & Durrett, 1988). That these movements have come more from lay people working to solve their own problems and increase their own opportunities, than from the architectural profession demonstrates that there is an impetus and desire for involvement on the part of ordinary people. But architects are often too far removed to realize it, too enmeshed in existing systems and societal hierarchies to connect with it, and to used to making the decisions rather than facilitating the decision-making process.

Participation Skeptics

Participatory efforts have also come under considerable criticism and scrutiny in an often skeptical professional arena (Broadbent, 1982, 1984; Francis, Iacofano, Moore, et al., 1978; Lackney, 1989). Several critics have been quick to note that architects claiming a commitment to user participation frequently produce buildings in form and style almost identical to projects they did without user participation. The conclusion they draw is that while some architects may profess a participatory and democratizing intent, they are indeed motivated by their own inclinations and personal styles, holding these paramount regardless of their stated intentions to the contrary.

This calls to mind Sherry Arnstein's important contribution to these issues, when her critical planning paper (1969) articulated a ladder of participation. In her conceptual ladder, the lower rungs offered no citizen control, intended no empowerment, and ranged instead from manipulation, to therapy, to placation. Successive rungs moved up through increasing levels of involvement and control given over to citizens, finally culminating in the top rungs of empowerment and liberation (see Appendix F). Her formulation was an important contribution to the realization that participation has many guises and its connection to empowerment is by no means guaranteed. This insight is only just beginning to dawn on

educators, development specialists, business practitioners, and others in parallel fields who have heretofore often embraced participation as a panacea in its own right.

Participation & Empowerment Studies: Inclusions & Omissions

A more thorough and broad discussion of ranges of participation in architecture and their relationship to empowerment is covered in my comprehensive paper, "Participatory Architecture for Popular Education and Empowerment" (Fisk, 1989). That paper identified several counter-threads of disaffection with modern architecture, traced the development of participatory architecture since its emergence in the late 1960s and explored in some detail examples of participation that involved high levels of user control and empowerment and others that did not. While that study offered a broad overview of the subject and referred to a range of examples from the field, it relied heavily on written accounts and did not explore in depth or first-hand any particular example. This dissertation does just that and serves as a case study amplification of the earlier work.

This study has examined one case in detail for several reasons. One reason is that while cases of participatory architecture have been documented, many of the available studies are summary and cursory, offering a broad collection of examples without in-depth study of any in particular (Hatch, 1984; Klein, 1993; Lackney, 1988; Sanoff, 1990). Christopher Alexander's "Oregon Experiment" (1975) is a notable exception, where he treats one project in considerable detail.

In addition, almost every study available is written exclusively from the perspective of the architect involved, sometimes with the addition of commentary from architectural colleagues. Alexander's writing documents his own projects as an architect, making bold claims of participation and empowerment, but in his own voice and from his perspective alone. Both Lackney (1988) and Sanoff (1990) cover a wide range of participatory projects, relying completely on the accounts of the architects or planners in charge. Hatch's compendium (1984) goes a step further and supplements the principals' accounts

with critiques and responses from other professional colleagues, and in one case only (Herman Hertzberger's Diagoon Houses in Delft) includes comments of the building users. Stephan Klein's work includes both reference to the project principals and the commentary of a collection of professionals who juried entries to the exhibit Klein helped to organize on Socially Conscious Design. But again, first hand accounts of participants other than those in charge are conspicuously absent (Klein, 1993).

The last few decades have seen increased interest in the perspective of building users, but these have largely taken the form of Post-Occupancy Evaluations (or POEs), and approach the building more as product than as process. The question asked is, "How satisfied are the building users with the buildings as products?" (Preiser, 1988). POEs often reflect a certain consumer approach to buildings, with a view to building an information base from which to improve future products and programming. People are seen as reactors to buildings and as sources of new information, rather than as primary actors on buildings or as key decision-makers. Researchers and designers involved with POEs are not usually concerned with substantially altering or reconceptualizing the design field or process or with fundamentally realigning, or even overtly addressing, the power relationships involved in architecture.

Asking "Extra Ordinary" People

In this dissertation I consider participation, empowerment, and architecture not just from the perspective of architects or critics, but most importantly from the viewpoint of the users, the clients, the lay people involved. I ask people how they feel about the project in question, what their active or reactive roles have been and what participating in various ways with the building has meant to them. Furthermore, I am attentive to how people tell about their relationship to the building, in their own words and their own ways. I am concerned with different ways of knowing and with people's own stories as a way of knowing. Hence this work has relevance to a growing body of work in the

fields of education and psychology, together with human potential and liberation movements, where different ways of knowing and articulating are gaining ground and being acknowledged and validated (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Heilbrun, 1988; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, and Surrey, 1991). It also has relevance to those intersted in narrative as a way of knowing and of telling (Williams, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Besides collecting, recapturing, and retelling peoples' stories and the chapel's history, this dissertation, itself, is woven together as a narrative. So it also speaks to alternative and emerging forms of research or of common, collective search.

Marginalized Voices: Women & Girls. Finding one's own voice and telling one's own story are especially important for those traditionally excluded from the dialogue or the institutional creation of knowledge and its sanction — so often the case with any but the most dominant in a culture. With women and Western culture that has been dominated by white, Anglo-Saxon males, by positivism, and by values of domination and control, the need is particularly evident. A growing body of work underscores the emerging sensitivity to understanding and hearing women's voices and to recognizing and validating their ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Miller, 1976; Starhawk, 1987; Weiler, 1988).

It is increasingly clear that who is allowed to speak, in what ways, about what subjects, and for what reasons, has powerful implications for empowerment, inclusion, and hegemony. The large body of work in feminism, political activism, and empowerment are particularly relevant and helpful here (Collins, 1991; Gitlin, 1994; hooks, 1981, 1990; Stone, 1994). Finding voice, solidarity, and community through telling one's own story and listening to each other's stories can be a powerful avenue toward establishing both individual and social identity and building a strong base for validation and empowerment (Barone, 1992; Williams, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

This study is important not just because it listens intently to lay people about architecture, but also because it explores a project where women and girls are substantively involved in a controlling role in architecture, where their voices in part come through architecture. Other participatory architectural projects documented to date are overwhelmingly from the domain and perspective of educated, privileged, white males. This project not only involves women, but it also involves teenagers, an age group almost entirely excluded from architectural research.

Digging Into Participation & Empowerment

This project also explores empowerment and participation in some depth. Too often, when and if empowerment is considered in architecture or in other fields, it is treated in a summary, almost cavalier fashion. Projects are boldly claimed to be empowering, without in-depth explanations or demonstrations of what empowerment entails. What is meant by empowerment is rarely articulated, and again, the connection between participation and empowerment is frequently presumed, but not often decisively demonstrated. This study explores the dynamic relationships among empowerment, participation, meaning, and architecture in hopes of better understanding these connections, both in the particular case under examination and for other settings.

In addition, the study takes multiple approaches to participation and empowerment. One part of the work tries to recapture and represent a particular case of architecture, participation, and, potentially, empowerment — an exploration and narrative both historical and ongoing. Another part of this effort is to make the study itself participatory and perhaps even empowering, although my claims for it are not so bold. I do however, explore avenues for making this research more and more participatory as it progresses.

How could I engage people substantively and on somwhat equal footing from the outset? What frustrates inclusion and equity in research and what promotes it? How do those play out in this project? Who sets the research agenda anyway? How can control

be shared? How open to change, redirection, and inclusion is the process along the way, or the end product? How can people's boundaries, integrity, and desires be honored and incorporated? How can my own intentions, reactions, insights and dilemmas be part of the story, but not the whole story. How can I, too, become an active subject in this work, open and accessible in a way that allows authenticity, encounter, and transformation? How can I be just as vulnerable, as open, and as visible here as others dare to risk with me?

These questions and many more challenge the researcher and the research process to be reflective, political, self-critical, and problematic. Important contributions to an ongoing dialogue about these issues have been raised both in participatory/action research (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1985; Hall, 1975, 1977, 1981a, 1981b, 1984; Park, 1978, 1992, 1993), and in critiques of education and educational research, especially those strengthened and fueled by feminist perspectives (Gitlin, 1994; Greene, 1988; Stone, 1994). Gitlin and Stone's compilations alone include some 38 authors addressing these issues, making clear that a wealth of voices are joining the fray and trying to make some sense of it. Lively debate and discussion about how research can be inclusive and empowering is at the cutting edge of work in education and community and political activism. Effective methods are still emerging and heart-felt searches continue for ways to make our processes more consistent with our values. I welcome and join this arena and hope this work contributes to it.

A Phenomenological Approach

In addition, this dissertation relates to an emerging phenomenological approach to architecture where the focus is on places and their meanings — on architecture as experience (Altman & Low, 1992; Bachelard, 1964; Bloomfield, 1994; Chawla, 1994; Cooper-Marcus, 1986, 1992, 1993; Lyndon, 1987a, 1978b, 1989; Mugerauer, 1994; Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985; Seamon, 1993). Architecture has long had a preoccupation

with symbolic and iconographic meaning. Phenomenology has some interest in these, but goes well beyond them to embrace people's everyday, highly particular, and holistic experience of architecture, from their direct physical and tactile experience to their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Phenomenology is interested in what architecture has to do with how people experience and with what they experience when they encounter architecture. Consequently it gives more credence and attention to ordinary people and their relationship to buildings than architecture has done traditionally. While the interest in phenomenology is not overwhelming among architects, it is gaining momentum. I hope that this dissertation will add a useful in-depth case study with phenomenological richness for those already interested and will encourage those not already involved to explore the links more closely. I have been encouraged that some of the work in this area has been particularly helpful to me in thinking about the case under study in this dissertation.

My Motivation, Personal Association and Background

My own motivations for doing this study are multiple. First, for ten years or more I have worked on participatory architecture, seeing it as a tool for democracy. This was followed by almost a decade of work on community organizing/planning, again with a participatory focus and a democratizing intent. More recently I have undertaken a doctoral program focusing on popular participation and empowerment, through the School of Education, in an effort to make some sense of my efforts, to see what others were doing in this regard, and to uncover or develop some sort of conceptual framework to tie it all together. This dissertation is the logical culmination of that work. It strikes me that my own needs are not dissimilar from others intent on participatory democracy.

Personal Experience with Participatory Architecture

I should say, further, that it is not just frustration with mainstream architecture that leads me to this study. It is also the wonderful experience I have had myself with participatory architecture. In my own life I have had the delightful experience of living in a highly interactive, participatory building, which happened to have been built as a sculptor's studio. Needing flexible space to accommodate large sculptures, the studio was designed and built with highly flexible floors and walls, so that spaces could be transformed from smaller rooms and separate floors to continuous vertical and horizontal spaces. The resulting sense of ownership and control over the space was a truly liberating and delightful experience, not only for me, but for others living in the building and even for those encountering it briefly. It was a building that invited interaction and play. You could literally play with the building. Yet it was not flimsy. The very mass and solidity of the building elements gave it an abiding and secure quality, underpinning and grounding its flexibility. That experience has given me firsthand exposure to participatory architecture and an abiding interest in it.

Gaining Access to Architecture as a Woman

As a woman I am particularly intrigued with gaining access to manipulating the built environment. In our culture, most often women are cast in the role of maintainers rather than transformers of built environments. Transforming the built environment is often considered an exclusively male realm. When I was growing up, it was rare to find women in architecture, but it was rarer still to find women as building contractors. Today, while women have made some inroads into architecture and contracting, they are still the exception rather than the rule. For me personally, then, involvement in architecture is partly a matter of liberation and empowerment, as I believe it is for women in general in cultures such as ours.

My Early Experience of the Chapel as a C. A. Student

This case focuses on Concord Academy and its chapel, where I was a student from 1961-63 shortly after the chapel had been reassembled there. I remember hearing the stories about the move and the carving. Sitting in the chapel, gazing up at the exposed wooden beams, marveling at the space, I remember thinking, "Wow, students and teachers did this! Kids did this! Girls did this." I began to think maybe we could do just about anything. For me, buildings had seemed important and solid before this, but also fairly remote and mysterious to construct. They were certainly not something that one, as an individual human being, would consider building. But sitting in the chapel I began to think maybe they weren't so remote and mysterious after all. Maybe they were something even I could tackle.

My Work in Architecture, Participation, and Appropriate Technology

Then, for my own part, several decades intervened. After spending two years at Concord Academy as a junior and then a senior, I went off to college to major in art history, and followed that with four years of graduate school earning a Master of Architecture degree. After that I worked briefly in architecture, then taught architecture extensively and soon launched a nonprofit, research-oriented "appropriate" architecture firm with my husband, where we focused on architecture that responded to the local climate, incorporated indigenous building materials and methods, and integrated high levels of user interaction and participation in the design and post-design phases. I invented several interactive design and planning games and techniques for users and clients, presented at conferences and the like, and considered our entire effort as one avenue toward participatory democracy.

Some years later I found myself moving from appropriate architecture to appropriate technology, where wind generators, solar collectors, and hydropower abound. That took

me to community organizing through alternative, renewable energy and opportunities for communities to gain more self-reliance and decentralized control over their lives.

Doctoral Program: Reflection & Collegiality

Several years after working with model alternative energy, community organizing efforts of national renown, I launched into a doctoral program at the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, intent on spending some time reflecting on what I had been doing all these years and curious to see how my efforts might relate to what others had been thinking and doing in education and development work.

Paulo Freire. This last move was inspired in large part by exposure to Paulo Freire, who was affiliatied with the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts at the time and whose ideas seemed to me to offer a conceptual framework for a lot of my own efforts. The chance to work with him and others who espoused and sought to further his work seemed especially promising. As it happened, for health and other reasons, Freire's association with the School of Education waned, but nevertheless several people at the school still carried on with the spirit and intent of his work, and gave special attention to nonformal education and to participatory and action research.

Empowerment in a Number of Guises. I welcomed and reveled in exposure to these efforts and ideas, all the while considering how they threw light on my own experience with participatory architecture and alternative energy organizing. Other work at the school amplified my exposure to participatory and nonformal education and methods by offering me introductions to qualitative research, group dynamics, and theories and practices of oppression, from homophobia to sexism, classism, and racism. I also had the opportunity to consider and experience processes and content focused on development and transformation in the context of individuals, organizations, and societies.

Prelude to This Dissertation. The themes most strongly running through all this work were participation and empowerment, but always in reference to fields other than architecture. The desire to apply these ideas to architecture led me to my comprehensive paper "Participatory Architecture for Popular Education and Empowerment" (Fisk, 1989), where I tried to decipher how participation and empowerment seemed related in architecture. In that paper I also explored concrete examples of participatory architecture and empowerment, choosing the best that I could find. Unfortunately none were in the United States and none were easily accessible to me firsthand. The present study was a natural outgrowth of that work, seeking to explore an example of participatory architecture first hand, in depth. I was also interested in exploring domestic examples.

Choosing a Case for This Dissertation

My initial inclination was to look for a case where issues of oppression were overt. An inner city minority effort to take over, rehabilitate, and then occupy empty, tax-delinquent buildings came to mind. Another option was a school in an African-American community where students and community members were engaged in a participatory design effort for a new community-based school. And then I thought of the chapel. It is not a project I would have thought of at the outset.

The chapel was largely a reconstruction project, rather than one designed and built from scratch. Hence the levels of initiative and primary decision-making and the opportunities for full participation could be expected to be far less than where people made all the decisions on their own. Furthermore, the setting was privileged and the participatory dismantling and reconstruction were long past — maybe too long past. They say timing is everything, and in this case, timing was key.

As it happened, just as I was considering my range of options for cases, I took my son, Noah, to Concord Academy where he was to start as a new sophomore. Welcoming new parents and students to the school, Tom Wilcox, the school's head, gathered parents, new students, and student leaders in the chapel. He greeted us all by saying, "Concord Academy is not about buildings, it is about people — except for this building." And then he launched into the story of the chapel's discovery, its dismantling and reconstruction, and the students' carving and building.

It couldn't have struck me more clearly what an apt example the chapel was for my work. It was real. It was completed. It was successful. More than that, it was loved. Although set in the context of privilege, it involved women and girls in building — especially at the outset. And when the original taking apart and reconstructing were combined with continued giving of senior and faculty chapels, it seemed a unique and fascinating example. Besides, I knew then and there that my heart was in it. That, more than anything, clinched it.

Professional Cautions

I knew from studying qualitative research and scholarly efforts that one should only undertake a project where one's heart was fully committed and one's motivation high. The process could be long and arduous and writers cautioned that perseverance and will were essential. A prerequisite for them was desire. You should choose something you really, really, really wanted to do. And, not knowing entirely why, I really wanted to explore this chapel as an example for my dissertation. As Bogdan and Biklen advise:

> However a topic comes to you, whatever it is, it should be important to you and excite you. Self-discipline can only take you so far in research. Without a touch of passion you may not have enough to sustain the effort to follow the work through to the end, or to go beyond the ordinary . . . be sure it is of sufficient interest to you to maintain your spirit. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 57)

I knew, too, that researchers caution against choosing a context where one is personally involved. Personal involvement can cloud one's judgment, they said, and

compromise a study. To quote Bogdan and Biklen again, "The second suggestion is to study something in which you are not directly involved" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 57). The dangers of strong personal involvement with a setting are that, as a researcher, you can too easily prejudge what is going on and can let your own personal concerns too easily take center stage. Your "commonsense understandings of what is going on" can too easily seem like the whole story (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 57). They particularly recommend avoiding settings where one is already involved if the study is undertaken early in one's career as a researcher.

Aware of all these and other cautions against personal involvement, I decided to plunge forward anyway. I had, after all, not been involved with the school significantly for thirty years. True, my son had just enrolled and was launching his own association with the school, but that did not seem sufficient reason to be deterred. In fact, I am sure one part of me wanted to stay connected to him in some closer way, as he was going to board at the school, away from home for such an extended period for the first time. Hopefully my association with him would not confound the study or unduly entangle it.

It also occurred to me that I might simply find this project a convenient way to reconnect with old friends and teachers, and there was, at first, that inclination. Yet the ease of entry and level of initial comfort I felt seemed like a significant early advantage. Similarly, I think my connections to the site provided the school with some level of comfort and familiarity with me as well. So, awake to the dangers of being overcome with sentimentality and nostalgia, and mindful that I might presume to know the site and the project too well already, I ventured forth. Desire and genuine energy and enthusiasm for the undertaking seemed to me to offer the surest ground from which to launch an effort such as a dissertation that from all reports required more than the usual tenacity, endurance, and fidelity.

Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations on several accounts. First, any qualitative study has limitations outlined later in Chapter 3, Methodology. I am not seeking "truth" or "just the facts" here. I do not purport to be objective. I explore what people say the chapel means to them — what they think it means to them. They may, of course, in part to please me, have said what they thought I wanted to hear. They may, in particular, have shied away from critical or derogatory comments in the interest of propriety and appearance. This might have been especially so since I have some investment in the place and in the project. I am both an alumna and a parent in relation to the school under study, so giving me a favorable impression might have mattered to people with whom I met. This was, however, more likely with administration first, teachers second, and, I think, not especially likely with students. This social desirability effect could well have happened even without my being aware of it. Later, during the analysis of the data, this question will be addressed. I think that it actually occurred very little, for reasons that will become clear in Chapter 3.

Also, there is the danger, particularly acute here where the site has such strong personal and community identity and meaning, that people may have recounted what reflected well on them, so heavily were they themselves invested in and identified with the site. This, too, will be explored during the analysis.

Another limitation to the study is that much of it is historical and people's memories are doubtless highly selective and in part arbitrary, particularly after a considerable time lapse. Triangulation via multiple sources for interviews and review of a variety of documents can help this problem, but cannot necessarily eliminate it. What I have sought here was not so much factual historical accuracy, as some understanding of the meanings people gave to their experience and setting and the meanings they have continued to hold, or what they have since come to make of that experience and setting.

Furthermore, as a study covering a considerable time span, I gave some time periods much more attention than others. I explored the time the chapel was moved and rebuilt in some detail, and the present in considerable depth, while giving less in-depth attention to the time before the chapel was moved and to the intervening years between its reconstruction and the present. I did not ignore these time periods completely, but they were not the main focus of my work. To have explored all of these in depth would have been beyond the time limitations of this particular study.

In addition, I interviewed participants generally only once. Follow-up conversations and meetings occurred with most participants, but not usually extended, recorded interviews, sometimes due to time constraints and often because of the ease established in the absence of a tape-recorder. I chose to include a wider range of participants rather than to revisit at length those already interviewed. This may have been compensated for partly by my sharing interview transcriptions with those interviewed, welcoming their further input, and by reviewing with them how their words would be integrated into my final dissertation text, again welcoming their suggestions for changes. These were critical to the end product, to particpants' fuller inclusion, and to our mutual confidence in the correspondance between the written words and people's "real" meanings. Nevertheless, a more extended study might have benefited from follow-up and taped interviews with participants.

Furthermore, despite my intentions toward inclusion and collaboration, equality and full participation were in some ways less than I had hoped and in others more than I expected. I wish that time allowed and academia encouraged full participant involvement at every stage. Now that this dissertation is more fully written would be the time to mull it over and to encourage and incorporate participants' responses not just to their own remarks, but to the whole. Only a few of those involved have had that opportunity yet, and their input and commitment has been invaluable. If this work continues past the dissertation itself (as I hope it will) and transforms into a book, I certainly hope to

incorporate as full involvement of participants with the whole as possible. I imagine it will be a great relief not to have a university statute of limitations breathing down my neck.

A further limitation is in the nature of case studies, which are not inherently generalizable. People in like settings may wish to draw analogies between their settings and this case study, but I cannot say that because this case exhibited certain characteristics, therefore other cases like it will follow suit. I can point out insights and patterns that I believe may be useful beyond this example, but can make no stipulations as to their sure occurrence elsewhere (Kennedy, 1979). Further, had totally different people been interviewed, we might have gotten an entirely different impression of this project. The pool of participants was by no means exhaustive and was to some extent self-selected, so it may very well have been skewed in one or more directions. Here again, however, I make no claims to objectivity in this study, but am interested instead in what those who were interviewed had to say. Their perspectives, with all their nuances and particularity, are precisely the heart of what I am exploring here. One participant expressed this beautifully when she said, "I'm convinced that what I say is very subjective — that my idea of the chapel is my idea of the chapel and maybe nothing more."

Similarly, I am the primary vehicle through whom all of these various sources have been filtered and selected. There is some balance to this by virtue of sharing transcripts and end product with participants and welcoming their comments, as well as in displaying the work in exhibit and in speaking about it for the school in the chapel. All these afforded participants opportunities to give me feedback on whether my selection of themes or interpretation of my own experiences with people hit home for them.

But still, this study ultimately relies to a great extent on my selections and interpretations. Someone else conducting these interviews and doing this fieldwork and document review might well have reached other conclusions and have quite different

interpretations. This is, no doubt, one reason work of this sort can be called interpretive. I present it as my own experience and set of interpretations and do not presume it would hold true for everyone else. Should others wish to explore their own interpretations of original data, these have been saved as originally recorded both in written, oral, and visual form, although access for others to these would need to be renegotiated with participants. These are coded in detail, however, so that retracing my steps through the material would be relatively easy.

One other limitation has to do with the form of dissertations in general, of which this is no exception. This form requires presentation almost entirely through written words. Their ability to convey the richness of experience that happens when people and buildings come together is limited. Pictures can help, yet in this format they are difficult to reproduce in very high quality and are limited to black and white. I include some in this work, nevertheless, in hopes that they will be of some use.

Photographs blown up and exhibited or high quality reproduction would be better. Videotape and film offer yet another, richer, fuller, more experiential medium where moving pictures are connected to sound. In the context of architecture these are particularly apt. Any of these more visual media are problematic within the constraints of traditional written dissertations. The reader should understand, however, that this work has to some extent utilized visual media to present the work to others. No doubt a fuller understanding and sense of this project would be gained by complementing this reading with exposure to the exhibit and to associated videos.

Definition of Terms

Chapel. Chapel has three meanings in this study. First is the specific building known as the chapel. Then comes the giving of chapel services or presentations, as in "Julie gave a wonderful chapel" or "Julie's chapel was on Wednesday," meaning she

gave a wonderful presentation in the chapel and her chapel presentation was on Wednesday. Referral to a person's own chapel usually means her specific one-time senior chapel presentation, given the import of a rite of passage. Faculty and administrators also "give chapels." Chapel also refers to a school period reserved for gatherings in the chapel where student, faculty, and administration presentations are given, three mornings a week from 8:15 to 8:30.

Articles used with "chapel" are particularly revealing. No article, i.e."chapel" by itself, tends to refer to the class period, as in "When is chapel?" The chapel usually refers to the building. A chapel, or a possessive article with "chapel," as in his chapel, refers to a chapel presentation. For example, "You should go to a chapel," means you should go to a chapel presentation, not you should go visit some chapel building sometime.

Participatory Architecture. This refers to architecture that welcomes higher levels of interaction and direct user participation than is usual in the world of buildings and architecture. People who are not professional architects, engineers, builders and the like are given more responsibility and input than usual and are put more directly in control of architectural decisions and/or processes. It could mean people having more say during the planning or design phase, being more directly involved in construction, or having high levels of control and manipulability after construction. Participatory architecture could also refer to buildings and designs that are directly engaging. A participatory building lets you have to do with it. It wants to be touched, acted upon, and imprinted.

Empowerment. By empowerment I mean increased capacity to be fully human. Empowerment can be considered power to, power for, and power with, as opposed to power over. Power over is domination, not empowerment. Empowerment can involve increased self-esteem and self-expression, greater capacity to recognize and articulate one's identity and intentions, and a growing ability to move from intentions to action — to have positive effects in the world. Empowerment can have individual, group, organizational, community, and societal dimensions, several of which we will explore.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY:
AN INTERACTIVE, QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

> In the beginning when the world was young, there were a great many thoughts, but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in a world were the truths and they were all beautiful. — Sherwood Anderson, quoted beside Jeannie Derderian's yearbook picture, C.A. '64

Overview and Rationale of The Approach

This study is a qualitative case study of a particular chapel at a private preparatory school, Concord Academy, in Concord, Massachusetts. The study is ethnographic, phenomenological, and interactive. It is also to some extent historical. Methods of inquiry include the primary and extensive use of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and photography, together with document review, correspondence, and direct participation. Methods are interactive and, to some degree, participatory as well. Direct experience and inquiry into the case are complemented by a literature review that relates the case to a larger body of work and thought so that each can help illuminate the other.

First, the study is qualitative rather than quantitative, as it is grounded in a non-positivist perspective. It neither seeks nor presumes there is "objective reality" or "truth." Rather, it recognizes and delights in multiple perspectives, experiences, and meanings. Both personal and collective experiences and meanings are indeed central to the study — the very heart of what is under study here.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for several reasons. First, since in large part the question is what has this building and people's experience of it meant to them, it lends itself to qualitative inquiry. People's meanings and experiences are rich and

multifaceted, involving thoughts, emotions, memories, values, senses — a host of human ways of knowing that do not readily reduce to numbers. Nor are they readily understood through numbers.

Furthermore, people's experiences and the meanings they make of them go well beyond the simple aggregation of their various senses and sensitivities. People's understanding of their experience, and, even more, the meaning they give to experience, is complex and holistic. In dynamic interplay are their rich personal repertoire of modes of knowing, their understanding of the setting, their particular culture and background, their assessment of how their personal experience relates to others, and their understanding of other's experiences and inferred meanings. While people may know very well what they mean by something, or what it means to them, and they may be able to unravel some of the reasons they think it means what it does, there is the clear acknowledgment that meaning goes beyond particular isolated variables. All sorts of things come into play, and indeed, what does come into play may be quite different from one person to the next. It is this dynamic interplay and the whole experiences and meanings that emerge that are of interest in this study, just as it is the range of experiences and meanings among different people that concerns us.

I am not looking for a right answer in this study. I presume that there will more likely be multiple answers, multiple questions, multiple perspectives. At the same time I am interested in exploring both the commonalties and the differences in people's perspectives and understandings and in searching for patterns to these that might reveal levels of insight and understanding that go beyond individual perceptions and conceptions. In that sense, the study goes beyond simple description. But it seeks insight and understanding from direct involvement and experience with the project and the participants, and lets the patterns and common meanings and differences emerge out of those.

Thus the study does not pose an hypothesis and seek to confirm or disconfirm it. The approach is dramatically different from the more traditional and typically "scientific" approach that Michael Patton refers to as grounded in the "hypothetico-deductive paradigm" (Patton, 1980, p. 19). Rather than start with an hypothesis or theory looking for demonstration, this approach starts with the situation and the people involved with it, and lets the meaning follow from them. Thus it is inductive, rather than deductive. Patton describes it as follows:

> . . . the researcher attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the research setting. Qualitative designs begin with specific observations and build toward general patterns. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerge from open-ended observations as the researcher comes to understand organizing patterns that exist in the empirical world under study. (Patton, 1980, p. 40)

Qualitative Research in Education: Background

The qualitative paradigm, while still emerging in some circles, started to appear in education through educational sociology, as early as the 1930's through Willard Waller's The Sociology of Teaching (1932). But qualitative methods were not embraced readily by education and the next several decades saw only sporadic, though important, qualitative studies of education (Becker et al., 1961). At the same time, important qualitative work went forward, largely in the fields of anthropology and sociology.

In the 1960s there was a considerable surge of interest in qualitative research, in part spurred by the tenor of the times that set out to challenge dominant paradigms in any guise, research included. It was also impelled by critiques of dominant education and a desire to include and hear from frequently marginalized groups. During the 1970s qualitative research gained an increasingly enthusiastic, if beleaguered, following. As Bogdan and Biklen describe this evolution,

> In the sixties, the qualitative mode was still marginal in education, practiced only by the more unconventional. While qualitative methods could not claim a central

> position in mainstream research and development in education in the early seventies, they could no longer be labeled fringe elements either. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 21)

Since then, qualitative research has gained increasing credence and momentum in education, beginning to come into its own during the eighties and nineties, in part due to major works explicating the method and helping launch it as a full-blown, acceptable method of study. Michael Patton's Qualitative Evaluation Methods (1980) spent almost 400 pages describing the method in detail, explaining its differences from the dominant positivist paradigm and demonstrating its use for project and field evaluations. Although not specifically focused on education, Patton's book could easily be applied to the field.

Just a few years later, Bogdan and Biklen's Qualitative Research for Education (1982) provided a thorough explanation of the method, traced its development and roots in sociology and anthropology as far back as the late 1800s, and described its emerging and diverse use in education, especially evident during the 1970s. Bogdan and Biklen unraveled threads within qualitative research, describing parallel, but somewhat different, qualitative approaches, from phenomenology, to symbolic interaction, to cultural anthropology, to ethnomethodology. The bulk of their work then explained how to conduct qualitative studies with detailed descriptions of procedures, options, and challenges involved in each research step.

If interest had been building before that, setting the stage, Bogdan and Biklen's book provided a firm launching pad for the qualitative research paradigm and approach in education. In the foreword to their book, Ray Rist, an established, respected researcher pursuing and promoting qualitative research in education throughout the 1970s, writes:

> During the past ten years there has been an explosion of interest in the application of qualitative methods to the study of education. Yet throughout this past decade, there has not existed a volume which explicitly linked this methodological approach to the study of education. With this present effort, Qualitative Research for Education, that linkage is now made. Those interested in education and who wish to study it from a qualitative vantage have available to them here an exceptional resource. This is all the more important given that it is the first book of its kind. It sets such a standard of excellence and completeness

> that other books to follow in this same area will be hard pressed to match, let alone surpass, it in quality and breadth of analysis. (Rist, in Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, ix)

Several years later, in 1985, Lincoln and Guba gave further impetus to the use of qualitative research through their book, Naturalistic Inquiry, which, when combined with Patton and Bogdan and Biklen, set qualitative research on firm, well argued, and rigorous academic ground. While positivists might still have their doubts, qualitative research now had strong allies and proponents and was positioned to take its place alongside more traditional approaches, operating on assumptions and practices quite different from those in the positivist tradition.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, of whatever strain, is generally accepted as having the following distinguishing features (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, pp. 27-30):

* **Setting:** Natural settings, as naturally occurring, rather than contrived, artificial, or controlled are preferred research settings. Context is considered primary in that settings of time, place, and circumstance are assumed to make an important difference and are given careful consideration.

* **Data Sources:** These include the natural setting in all its complexity: its physical characteristics, the people naturally inhabiting the setting, the reactions of the researcher to the setting and people. The researcher is the primary tool through whom research is gathered.

* **Richly Descriptive Data Gathering:** This includes rich, detailed, on-site descriptions of thoughts, feelings, impressions, senses, and observed events from the perspective of the researcher and the participants. Preference is for complete, verbatim records, in people's own words. First-hand descriptions can include recorded interviews and transcripts, videotapes, films, photos, field notes, written documents and letters.

* **Inductive Data Gathering and Analysis:** Data gathering attempts to be inclusive rather than preselected and partial. Rich descriptive detail and unabridged data are thus

key. Analysis lets the patterns and meaning emerge from broad consideration of the data set as a whole, particularly across sources and media. Pivotal questions and dominant themes are discerned from close consideration of a host of sources, participants, and perspectives. There are no a priori hypotheses or theories to test or apply.

* **Multiple Meanings and Perspectives:** The attempt is to be inclusive and true to varying perspectives and understandings and open to contradictions, differences, diversity, paradox, and complexity. Rather than eliminating differences in the interest of coherence or congruence, the intention is to adhere as closely as possible to the range of perceptions, meanings, and experiences of participants.

* **Holistic:** Concern is with the richness and complexity of experience as it is lived, rather than with isolated variables, partial views, or segments of experience. Favors immersion and consideration of a full range of human faculties in interpreting and experiencing setting

* **Emphasis on Process:** What situations look like and how they happen are of primary concern. A typical question is "What's going on here?"

* **Understanding as a Goal:** Description and understanding are goals rather than control or prediction. Individual situations are not presumed to be generalizable beyond their particular settings.

Methods Used in This Case Study

A Critical Case

Not chosen at random, this critical case was specifically selected for its potential as an example of combining participatory architecture and participatory education. Among the special characteristics that gave it appeal was that women and girls played a crucial role in the project — people frequently marginalized in the domain of buildings and architecture, especially in the "developed" world. Of further appeal was the impression that the building and the project were, on the face of it, "successful." People seemed generally proud of the building and its history at C.A.. At some level, one could hope

that the building and the experience of it "worked" for people and might serve as a positive example.

It also had some history, so that it might be possible to see if the building and involvement with it held meaning for people, even after a considerable time had elapsed. There would be an opportunity to ask people about their involvement and the building's meaning to them, well past any initial euphoria or enthusiasm following what we might imagine to be the heady victory of construction. Since considerable time had elapsed since the building's dismantling and reconstruction, there would also be an opportunity to ask whether the fact of people actively participating in taking it down and putting it back up mattered to people over time. It would also be possible to explore how the building's meaning and use might have changed and evolved over time, with this study coming some hundred and fifty years after the initial construction of the building, and some thirty-five years after it was moved and reassembled. Critically, however, although considerable time had passed, thirty-five years was still recent enough that most of those heavily involved initially were still living and presumably somewhat accessible. This was also a sufficient time lapse to explore how much staying power the building and experience had for people. How much, if at all, did it still matter to them, and why?

Interactive, Participatory Methods

In addition to being a qualitative study, this work actively sought ways for participants to take an active and directive role in the research itself. This was done in part from a conviction that participatory research (PR) is more egalitarian and more just than research that is not participatory. PR puts people who are not necessarily the initial researchers in a more central and controlling position. PR approaches participants as subjects rather than objects. PR actively creates opportunities for the research to be a mutual collaboration, with participants becoming co-researchers. PR also looks beyond research to action, with the ultimate goal of liberation.

Participatory Research Background. Participatory research (PR), as it is usually construed, grew out of third world struggles and relates strongly to the work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1985) in Brazil, Pramod Prajuli (1986, 1989) and Rajesh Tandon (1981a, 1981b, 1983) in India , and Orlando Fals Borda in Columbia (1982, 1984, 1985). Others working from a western, North American base on issues of oppression and liberation have also embraced and promoted the approach (Freire & Horton, 1990; Gaventa, 1980, 1981, 1985; Hall, 1975, 1977, 1981a, 1981b, 1984; Maguire, 1987; Park 1978, 1992, 1993). Some in western, industrialized settings have even applied the ideas within the context of management and organizational development (Brown, 1981, 1983).

PR has had an overt agenda of working collaboratively with oppressed people on their oppressions and using the PR process as a tool for liberation. As conceived by Paulo Freire and others, PR involves a sequence of research, action, and reflection. Initial research begins by oppressed people collaboratively naming their reality and their oppression as a tool to beginning to understand it. The theory is that together they determine actions to take to try to break the cycle of oppression. Then, after taking action, they come together to reflect on the success or failure of their actions, to rename their new reality, and to move on to future actions, and so on. This sequence is thought of as cycling and recycling back on itself in an ongoing process of transformation and liberation.

Because PR presumes an action component (and is sometimes referred to as participatory action research) and a recycling back through naming, action, and reflection, it can be extremely time-consuming and involves heavy involvement and even immersion in a community or group for what can easily become a commitment of several years.

I share many of the intentions of participatory research and am drawn to its methods, but for a variety of reasons this particular study is participatory in some respects and not in others. In keeping with a participatory intent and approach, I try to create and

incorporate participatory, interactive opportunities in this study, from involving others in deciding who should be involved, to welcoming others to help set the agendas for the work, to asking for advice on how to proceed, what avenues to pursue, and what activities to undertake. The processes of inquiry were themselves open-ended and interactive, centering around interviews that were more dialogues than they were sessions following predetermined questions and sequences. Nevertheless, the study began as mine and only gradually evolved as more fully shared. In some ways, though, my role was more of a listener, facilitator, collector, and synthesizer than it was of an insistent controller. My process let other people's voices come to the fore and I think that the more that happened, the more participant investment and involvement grew. I also think that my desire to let other people in and to honor each one's perspective helped create a climate of sharing and mutual respect that allowed the study to be more collaborative and inclusive than it might otherwise have been.

This work has been participatory more in a reflective than an active sense. Although my focus is on a highly participatory setting — the chapel as an early moving and rebuilding project and as an evolving rite of passage and cauldron for community — the actual doing of this research has been far more modest. It was never intended as a direct intervention, although I do think it has functioned in that capacity in a limited and somewhat understated way. As I outline some of the individual research tools used and go on to describe the process as it evolved, the reader will doubtless recognize small ways in which the work became increasingly participatory. I make no claims, however, that this has been, in itself, particularly liberating.

I do think it has been authentic. It has been "real" and charged in a way that has mattered — mattered to me, mattered to many of those who participated, mattered to others who have encountered the work, and mattered to Concord Academy, if those who make bold to speak for the school as a whole are to be believed. How and why this

happened should emerge as the story unfolds of the chapel, of people's connections to it, and of the evolution of this study itself.

Setting the Research Agenda

Participatory researchers seek to facilitate the research process so that participants are substantially in control, both of the process of doing the research and of determining the research direction, purposes, and content. This project did that somewhat, but not entirely. First, at the outset, I asked a key informant and gatekeeper, the chief administrator of the school, to what extent the research I proposed was of interest and seemed appropriate, and I asked what advice he would have about how I should proceed, what would be important to look at and do, and who should be involved. I frequently asked this of other participants as well. In addition, I always asked participants if they had any agendas or concerns they would like me to pursue through this study — if there was anything I could accomplish or find out for them through the study. While participants sometimes seemed surprised by the question, they nevertheless offered a host of varied suggestions of things they would enjoy having incorporated into the study. To the extent that time and opportunity allowed, I tried to pursue their agendas and incorporate them into my own. Sometimes at their urging I took major steps that I never would have undertaken otherwise.

Nevertheless, the project remained primarily my study, rather than theirs. In a truly participatory research study, the distinctions between researcher and participant would be blurred as they both entered into a mutual relationship of co-discovery. All parties mutually determining the agenda for research at the outset is often considered pivotal to a fully participatory outcome.

In spite of my own initial choices driving the study to a large extent, I was highly conscious of welcoming primary participant input throughout the process, and of being

responsive to participants' perspectives, hopes and intentions. Even so, I often had the feeling that many times they mentioned their own concerns and agendas more to accommodate me than out of some primary need of their own. However, I do think that as the project progressed, they came to identify more heavily with it, to participate more fully in it, and to begin to feel a real part of it. Now, several years into the project, I think many of those directly participating in the study and others at the school have a strong feeling of affiliation with the study, if not some sense of ownership of it as well. What this study is for and how it can be used has increasingly been defined and embraced by the participants.

Range of Data Collection Methods

In this study I used a number of different data collection methods including interview/ dialogues, class exercises, on-site participant observation, photography, videotape, document review, correspondence, and direct participation. A variety of methods has the advantage of offering triangulation, so that a wider range of vantage points and modes of inquiry are sought, giving a richer, more multifaceted picture of what is going on. A combination of data sources has the advantage that one mode can complement and throw light on another. One may strengthen and reinforce the other, or may offer a perspective quite different from the other. The more sources, the fuller the picture, with all its potential complexities and amplitude. This will be explained in more detail toward the end of this chapter under "Trustworthiness."

Selecting Participants

I used key informants in the study, both to interview initially and to ask whom it would be important and appropriate to interview. This was particularly apt, given that the study had an important historical dimension. Others were in key positions to know who

had ongoing exposure and experience with the site over time and who played pivotal roles. This was also another opportunity for participants to take an active role in the study by helping to determine who was to be involved.

I also intended to interview people from as many points of involvement with the chapel as possible and practical, from both past and present, including faculty, students, administrators, parents and community members. This was to allow as full and inclusive a picture to emerge as possible, while still keeping the number of people involved manageable.

The final tally of people I engaged in formal interview/dialogues included thirty-eight people: ten faculty members, eight students, eleven alumnae, five administrators, one cleaning staff person and three community members. In several cases those interviewed fulfilled different roles over time at Concord, as in the case of one woman who had been a student at C.A. in the 1960s, a C.A. parent in the 1980s, and is now a teacher there. Eleven people interviewed had also been C.A. parents at some point, including four teachers, five alumnae, and two administrators. A handful of participants had also served as C.A. trustees.

In the interest of historical and developmental perspective, I was especially eager to interview people with a long-standing association with the school. Teachers were usually the ones with the longest ongoing relationship to the school and those whom I interviewed included: two teachers with thirty-five to forty years each at C.A.; three with twenty-five years or more apiece; one with twenty years; three with over ten years each; and finally one with only five years at C.A. Their combined teaching time added up to two hundred and twenty-four years at Concord Academy.

Alumnae interviewed were largely from the chapel's earliest days at C.A., as I wanted to speak with people directly involved in the chapel move, in the early carving, and in the steeple-building. I interviewed only two alumnae/i from significantly later — both from the '70s and both of whom have had continued relationships with the school

since their time as students. I also spoke at some length with other alumnae from well before and well after the chapel's move, but in less formal, untaped discussions. I also received written communications from several of these earlier and more recent alumnae. Countless other students, faculty, and alumnae and parents were involved in this study in ad hoc conversations and encounters.

Open-ended Interviews/Dialogue

I engaged participants in open-ended, dialogic interviews, each lasting anywhere from forty-five minutes to up to two hours. Most interviews were conducted one-on-one, although three interviews involved more than one person simultaneously. Most people were interviewed only once, although I returned to several people later for lengthy discussions, but without taping most of those follow-up conversations. In a few cases conversations were not taped because of the initial awkwardness of the situation, or because people specifically requested that I not tape. Several of those whom I returned to for follow-up discussions expressed relief and increased comfort at not being taped on our second meeting. In addition to these formal interviews, I also met with a class of 12 students in an untaped, interactive group dialogue. Many interviews were conducted in the chapel itself, while others were at C.A., usually in nearby faculty or administrative offices. I met with some alumnae at Concord in the chapel and with others at their homes. One came to my home.

I prefaced the interviews by explaining to people that I was interested in the chapel and what it has meant to people and that I had a particular interest in participatory architecture and empowerment. I explained my background a little, my association with C.A., and my doctoral program. Invariably at the outset I spoke briefly about what I meant by participatory architecture and by empowerment. After that, however, to a large extent I tried to let each person take the conversation where they would, launching them with the question, "What does the chapel mean to you?" I asked probing questions and encouraged people to elaborate on their comments, but did not try to orchestrate the

interview in a step-by-step way with one question after another. Rather, I hoped to give participants a chance to tell their own stories as they initially came to them.

Sometimes, once we were well into an interview I would pose a specific question so that I would be sure that we did not miss a topic that was pressing for me. Rather than seeing the participants as sources of data, however, or objects of research, I considered both myself and the participants as dynamic subjects in interaction with each other. In that sense the interviews were more like dialogues, particularly once they were well underway and a certain level of comfort had been established.

In that same spirit, my own stance in interviews was not a distant, remote, academic one. I came, rather, to each interview in the spirit of encounter — open, accessible, attentive, and ready to enter into relationship with the other person as a person, where all our faculties and dimensions as human beings could come into play. This approach takes a fundamentally qualitative stance and pushes in the direction of increased participation, respecting all people involved as full human beings, rather than boxing them in and objectifying them as "data sources."

Photography

In addition I used photography extensively in this study. I photographed the chapel in use and out, in various seasons, at various times of day, from various vantage points. I hoped to use photographs to capture some of what the chapel seemed to me to be about. Photography was also appealing because of its holistic and evocative nature. It seemed to me that some of the spirit of the place that was the chapel might be more readily portrayed through pictures than through words.

I also saw photography as a way of sharing with people who were not able to experience the chapel or my study first-hand. I anticipated interviewing alumnae and former teachers or administrators remote from the site and thought that pictures might be critical in evoking their memories and making the chapel more present for them. In

addition, I had thought that I might want to use photographs in some way, as in an exhibit or book or booklet that would offer an avenue for making the study itself more visible and accessible to people. I also asked participants' advice about these ideas and how I might use photography to advantage.

With their encouragement I created an exhibit with enlarged photographs (10"x14") juxtaposed with blow-ups of quotes from interviews. The exhibit is on eight large (32"x39") and six smaller (c. 18"x32" and 12"x16") foamcoreboard panels and is a photographic synopsis of this project. It offers a brief visual and verbal taste of the chapel and its range of meanings to various participants. Later versions of the exhibit included copies of letters received, extractable from their mounted envelopes, as a way of sharing another tactile and personal dimension of the project with people. In addition, usually the exhibit has been accompanied by a writing table and tablet, inviting viewer comments.

Several student, faculty, and administrative participants helped select the photographs to use from over two hundred photographs I had taken. I also invited two students to participate with their own photographs of the chapel, having seen some thought-provoking photographs they had taken and displayed earlier. One of those two contributed some of her work to the exhibit. Other students helped measure for and hang the exhibit, helped select small photographs for flyers about the exhibit and talk, and distributed these throughout the school. Since the exhibit has been up several times now, students have helped over the last few years, usually by helping prepare and set up the panels. My own presentations to the school were also videotaped by students, giving them another avenue for involvement in the project and yielding videotapes to add to the data available for analysis. School Development and Alumnae Office staff also assisted with signs, publicity, and storage.

In addition, one faculty participant offered her science lab for use in preparing the exhibit, as it was adjacent to the initial exhibit space and available during the first

weekend when the exhibit was going up. Using this as a work space for the project proved to be a wonderful opportunity for students, faculty, staff, and administrators to encounter the project on a more informal basis and to interact with me about it. Several of them would drop in on me, in situ, and chat about the project, offering afterthoughts, insights, or ongoing suggestions. Partially preparing the exhibit in a space in the school seemed to make my own presence less formal, took away some of the mystique of the project, and gave it a more in-house feeling in some ways.

I do think that putting the project in highly visual terms and on display was a direct and provocative way to make it more accessible. People could encounter the exhibit who would never participate in formal interviews. Some saw themselves in the pictures. Several people remarked that simply seeing the chapel exhibited in this way, with present day and historical commentary, with issues surrounding the chapel identified, with evocative and pointed pictures, gave them a mirror on themselves that they really valued. In some ways it reminded them of their own values and their value. For many people the chapel <u>is</u> Concord Academy, and Concord Academy at its best. So some told me how important it was for them that this project reminded them of their strengths as a school, sometimes all to easy to forget in the throes of daily teaching and learning.

To put the project on display was to come out in the open with it. Right there the balance shifts from what might have been assumed to be my carefully guarded or cloistered study, to something that is a part of the school. I have no doubt that the sense of ownership and involvement that emerged in this study would have been completely different without the exhibit. Even well after the formal interviews were completed, the transcripts returned, and the final selections for this dissertation amended and eventually approved by participants — at a time when one might think the school's involvement would wane, requests were still being made to put the exhibit on display.

Participant Observation

I had expected that participant observation would play a minor, but complementary role in this study, since it was conceived as substantially historical. Immediately upon embarking on the study, however, initial gatekeepers and key informants insisted that it was crucial to observe and participate in events that happened in the chapel — especially in the giving of chapels, where seniors present themselves and their thoughts to the entire school. I relied on the advice of key informants and observed and participated in a wide range of events held in the chapel, including individual chapels given by students, faculty, and administrators; a key community meeting; alumnae events: a class meeting; Senior Baccalaureate; and two Graduation ceremonies with the chapel in the background. I also spent considerable time in the chapel at various times of day and night when nothing was officially scheduled there.

I believe that participating in chapels and spending considerable time in and with the chapel brought powerful authenticity to this study. The chapel itself has an unassuming, but undeniable, power, a "presence" that easily and warmly lets one in. What transpires in chapels given by students, faculty, and others is equally powerful and "real." For me, participating in these made all the difference and invited me to be as "real" as they were.

Documents

Several documents were used in the study, many suggested and offered by the participants. A key document was a booklet the school had produced as a history of the chapel, written principally by Mrs. Hall (1962), describing the project from inception to completion. The newly published version of the booklet (1984) adds a segment by Ellen Smith Hardee (C.A. '62), updating the chapel's history since 1962 and including the 1984 dedication of the chapel to Mrs. Hall. Other documents participants suggested and that I reviewed included, past yearbooks, specific student newspaper articles, A History of Concord Academy: The First Half Century, by C.A. teacher Philip McFarland (1984),

alumnae magazines, C.A. brochures, school catalogues, and mailings. The school archives were also suggested and contained invaluable photographs, particularly of the chapel's move and early days at Concord Academy.

In addition, several people offered to share documentation they had put together themselves about the chapel. One was a tape recording a key participant had made of the ceremony and speeches given at the dedication of the chapel to Mrs. Hall. Another was a slide show accompanied by a tape recording that a faculty participant had made about the school, including key segments on the chapel and comments about the chapel made by two other long-time faculty members. A third source was videotapes made of individual student chapels, a standard practice among students and faculty at the school. The inclusion of these various sources of participants' own documentations of the chapel were further ways in which the project invited and welcomed participant involvement.

Yet another source was written versions of individual chapels given, some obtained directly from the writers and others available through their publication in the Alumnae Magazine. Finally, a history of Strafford, New Hampshire was also reviewed, as it contained mention of the chapel's origins and use in New Hampshire.

Letters

One unanticipated source of information and interaction was through a school publication and letters received in response. When the study was well underway, the school Alumnae Office asked if they might include an article about the project in the Alumnae Magazine, which they subsequently did, including a particular photograph they selected. Several letters were received as a result, three from alumnae, and one from a former parent and one-time choirboy from the time when the chapel had been a church in its original location. The Alumnae Office interest and involvement and the responses received were further ways in which the project was participatory beyond the usual limits of a purely qualitative researcher's study.

Personal Participation

In addition, at the urging of key participants, I also gave several presentations in the chapel about this project. One was to a group of forty or so students and faculty from the school, in a forty-five minute free period during the day. Another was as a regular morning chapel to the entire school, and three other times were for successive Alumnae Weekends. One Alumnae Weekend presentation was together with Mrs. Hall, who had been gracious enough to join me and other alumnae for the event. These were also all accompanied by the photographic/interview exhibit being on display. All these allowed broader exposure and more general vicarious participation in the study, so that it was not limited to just those who had been interviewed. Opportunities to encounter and interact with thiswork and with me went way beyond those usual in academic, scholarly studies.

Equally important, these presentations in the chapel put me in the sudden position of directly experiencing, in a personal way, as a doer, the very events I had been experiencing as a participant observer. The tables were turned. From the standpoint of my own involvement, speaking formally about the chapel in the chapel brought the project home in a powerful and personal way that made me much more fully participant than before and that put me and others at the school on a much more equal footing. I was no longer just the outsider looking in. I think this was particularly true because to give a chapel involves considerable personal risk and commitment, something that will be discussed at more length in the section of this paper that addresses analysis.

Analytic Methods

My analysis for this project involved searching for some historical accuracy, as demonstrated above, but more important, I looked for recurring themes and patterns, through review of interviews, documents, field notes, slide show, videotapes, and photographs. My process was more intuitive and holistic than, for example, grounded

theory in its strict application would suggest (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I did not conduct a detailed, reductionist analysis using word counts or computer programs to reveal frequencies and numerical patterns to topics mentioned. Rather, I reviewed my various sources several times and in conjunction with each other, so that each could amplify and complement or contradict the other, and so that eventually I could discern higher levels of abstraction and understanding.

The interviews received the most detailed treatment, in that I first conducted them and then reheard them in transcribing. Then I shared individual transcripts with participants asking for comments, modifications, or elaboration. In addition, I edited down several interviews for analytic purposes. The process of putting together an exhibit meant that I again reviewed and carefully read most interviews to select interview sections to exhibit. Finally, I reviewed entire interviews and particular interview segments in preparation for writing the analytic section of this paper. Similarly, I carefully read and reread field notes at each stage, especially in preparation for the presentations I gave for the school.

As mentioned above, participants helped select photographs, giving them a role in beginning to identify themes. I conducted early analysis when putting together the exhibit, as the process of selecting photographs and quotes involved finding common threads among interviews and grouping them along with appropriate photographs.

The analytic process included ongoing discussion with some project participants as well as with people not originally interviewed, but encountered at the school during the course of the project, a process greatly enhanced by the exposure the project got through the exhibits and chapel presentations about it. As a whole, the process involved considerable personal reflection, coupled with data review, focused and enriched by putting together the exhibit and by presenting talks on the project several times at C.A. Themes and patterns discerned raised a number of issues that have been considered in the literature and in various fields of study. So this case and the issues and insights found here were also considered in relation to larger bodies of knowledge and to particular

theories and conceptual frameworks that seemed applicable. In many ways, having concepts and issues in the back of my mind from other fields and from literature meant that throughout the study a dynamic interplay between induction and deduction was at work, even though there was not the conscious prior application of a particular theory or hypothesis.

While the process did not allow broad generalizations based on this one case alone, it did reveal parallels between this case and other efforts that have been documented. My intent was not to arrive at some universal "truth", but rather to explore one case in depth to see what it might yield by way of insights or demonstration. Similarly, readers may wish to draw their own conclusions of relevance and applicability of this study and its conclusions to their own settings (Kennedy, 1979).

Trustworthiness: Multiple Sources and Perspectives

Triangulation

As mentioned briefly before, multiple sources and perspectives yield a richer, more multifaceted picture than would be available from any single source. Hence not only did I use a variety of data types, but I gathered a wide range of samples within each type. I also took literally hundreds of photographs at intentionally varied times and differing contexts. Participants were numerous, held a wide range of roles, and spanned a variety of time periods. Some were specifically chosen because others recommended them for having phenomenal memories. Others were suggested because their roles were pivotal or their perspective considered especially insightful. Still more were mentioned because they either strongly represented a thread or particularly powerful moment in the chapel's history, or, alternatively, because they broke the mold. Several were suggested because the chapels they, themselves, had given were so memorable.

First-hand Accounts

As much as possible, I gathered first-hand accounts and asked people what they, themselves, thought or experienced. Sometimes I asked what they thought the chapel meant to the school as a whole as well. Occasionally I asked participants what they thought others thought, as in asking faculty what students thought. Sometimes they offered firm replies and at other times suggested I ask the students directly. Whenever I asked people what they thought others thought, I took their replies as a reflection of the speakers' own thoughts, rather than presuming that they necessarily held for those they conjectured about. On several occasions I had opportunities to address large groups within the school and to pose questions directly to the entire group, thus confirming or disconfirming what others might have said about the group as a whole.

Readers should remember that relying on what people say is often fraught with pitfalls. People's memories fail them. Sometimes, too, they are reluctant to voice what they really think about something. They may be unsure themselves of what they think. They may too easily acquiesce with what they think the interviewer wants to hear. They may not wish to divulge what they really think. What they say can also be at odds with what they do or what they demonstrate, as when a person's face gets incredibly red, brows furrow, jaws tighten, lips clamp together and in a tense, loud voice the person exclaims that he or she is not upset.

In keeping with a desire to decipher some of these traps, I tape-recorded almost all interviews in this study and transcribed most verbatim. So transcripts included sighs, pauses, "er's" and "um's," in part because these can often reveal content not immediately obvious from full, cleaned-up sentences and words alone. I noted tone of voice, demeanor, and emphasis as well, to convey not just <u>what</u> was said, but <u>how</u> it was said. In this paper words that are underlined in quotes from interviews indicate extra emphasis by the speaker through volume and tone of voice, for example. I also kept field notes as a complement to interviews and to personal experience, amplifying the spoken

conversation with descriptive, qualitative data from my own observations, reactions, and reflections.

In addition, I shared transcribed interviews with participants who were asked to reread, edit, and add to them as they wished. I assured participants that interviews would go beyond our own personal conversation only to the extent that they wished. Any segments which they wished to keep private would remain private. I assured them of anonymity as well, should they wish it. Besides a normal courtesy and right preserved for participants, I hoped that these assurances would encourage them to be forthright and open. I also hoped that the open-ended, dialogic format would allow them to express themselves as themselves, rather than as respondents to my queries. The number and variety of participants, with their wide-ranging experience, lent both depth and breadth to the study. I also interviewed enough people that I began to find that I reached a level of saturation. At some point I began to feel that further interviews would not necessarily yield significantly new results.

In addition, I should note that people interviewed had multiple opportunities to amend their comments, increasing as the work progressed and began to come together as a written dissertation. Besides reviewing whole transcripts and early selections of quotes for the exhibit, participants were asked to review my selection of quotes to include in the dissertation itself, allowing them to see the context in which they were quoted and to respond with any concerns. Their level of comfort and ease seemed to grow over the course of the study, perhaps out of familiarity. Then impending publication raised the stakes and seemed to increase participants' desires to be sure their words really reflected their meanings. Highlighting specific quotes also put more burden on the words chosen. So as the work progressed, people became more attentive to their own words and input.

Some who had given blanket approval of their entire transcripts before now balked at certain segments. Some asked that sections be deleted for fear of hurting people's feelings. Several were aghast at their actual diction and preferred grammatically correct,

complete sentences. Still others thought their words reflected badly on them, perhaps being too colloquial or informal, too undignified. Many thought themselves woefully inarticulate. For some seeing something highly intimate and emotionally charged in stark black and white, reduced to words on paper that anyone might read, seemed somehow a violation. Whatever the reasons, I honored requests for modifications, even in the few cases where the very reason I had chosen a quote might be lost in the adjustment.

In one or two cases a request for a change seemed to me to so much lose the power of what was said, albeit gaining grammatical correctness or apparent propriety, that I found myself countering the suggestion for a change with an attempt to explain why I thought we should keep the original quote. Interestingly, this once resulted in a kind of tug of war, where I tried to get the other person to agree to the original, while the other one tried to convince me of the need for change. We might finally agree to a compromise over the phone, but when I followed that up by sending the revised hard copy for approval, it would return to me with all the same changes the participant had first suggested.

Although I still regret the loss of some of what those original quotes conveyed and revealed, I was and am bound to honor participants' wishes. Even when my academic advisors might remind me that this was, after all, my dissertation, and I had a certain amount of discretion about what to include and omit, and what to revise or not, I found myself coming back to the importance of keeping my agreements with people. One of those was that participants had control of what would be used from interviews and reserved the right to revise their remarks.

This is, of course, a delicate ethical issue. If people revise their statements in the interest of appearance, how much does this taint what they actually think and did say? Alternatively, who am I to presume that their original remarks are somehow sacrosanct? Furthermore, speaking casually one-on-one, even when tape-recorded, entails far less risk and exposure than appearing in a printed publication. Participants need to have the

right to protect themselves or others as much as they feel they need to. Part of my job is to honor that right.

Sometimes in this work I have felt more protective of participants than they felt of themselves. I remember that when the exhibit of photos and quotes first went up, I suddenly felt protective of those I had quoted and felt vulnerable for them. This was particularly true when I occasionally overheard a critical comment by a viewer objecting to something someone had said. My anxiety and sense of caution increased even more as we moved from mere transcripts or in-school exhibit to dissertation publication. This hit home especially strongly for me in relation to participants who revealed the most and let themselves be the most vulnerable. It was a lesson for me in daring to be vulnerable that even when I expected caution and was particularly careful to invite it, some participants had no qualms about their own exposure. Their commitment to be "real" and their openness to sharing what mattered most to them were overriding. I respect and honor that and have learned a great deal from it. It felt like the kind of lesson the chapel teaches.

I think that the written document that is this dissertation is more fully owned by participants, more collaborative, and more respectful because the process has afforded multiple opportunities for participant input and because the more the documentation process continued, the closer it was scrutinized.

Finally, the long time spent on this project, from the winter of '91 until late '95, has given me ample opportunity to gather a great deal of material, to involve participants at a number of stages, and to benefit from our mutual reflection on the topic and the project.

Personal Experience

In this study, personal experience was an important complement to interviews, documents, and photographs. Other people can describe the chapel,but experiencing it first-hand is so much more full, embraces all the senses so richly, and envelopes the whole thinking, feeling, intuiting <u>being</u> so holistically that other people's words, no

matter how poetic and powerful, cannot substitute for direct personal experience. No wonder virtually everyone I first encountered at C.A. said that I had to come to a chapel.

For me the power of the whole experience of the chapel as a building and space and the whole experience of being at particular student and faculty chapels was so all-encompassing and so exceptionally "real," that neither words, nor pictures, nor their combination could possibly substitute for the actual experience and encounter. Until I had been there myself (especially recently), my sense of the chapel was more like the negative of a color photo than the full photo itself, or like the dots in a newspaper image, compared to the recognizable picture. As with interviews, I went to a highly varied set of chapels and encountered the chapel under a wide range of circumstances. Here, too, I went to enough chapels that there was a point when I began to feel that I wasn't necessarily learning anything more about chapels by going to more of them.

Then, in turn, coming to other people's chapels gave just a hint of what it was like to actually give a chapel myself. As Joanne Hoffman, Associate Head of C.A., said to me, in urging me to give a chapel about this project,

> I think this is a way that gets at . . . the connecting of the space with the academic,with the emotional, the spiritual, the psychological, in a way that would become very real and powerful for you. And I think it would for us — for us especially. And that connection, I think, would do the kind of thing that you're thinking about with your dissertation, that would make it . . . sparkle.

At another point she said that I couldn't possibly do all of this (study and research) and have it be "real" without doing a chapel myself. More than anything else I did in this study, actually giving a chapel amplified and transformed my effort completely. Far more than just additional "data" from yet another perspective, giving a chapel was like a sudden quantum leap into the community through intimate, close, highly charged and personally challenging encounter. Now, in some ways, Concord Academy was in the controlling position and I was being invited to participate with the school in a powerful, central rite.

If before I had been worried that I speak to all the most significant actors and include crucial perspectives, now I had to think about who I was as a full person, who they were

as a school and as a collection of individuals, some of whom I had come to know quite closely. I had to think not just about speaking, but about sharing. It challenged me to shed the trappings and search for the roots of meaning, to come to grips with what this study was really all about for me, why I had undertaken it, and what, in its most essential nature, it meant both to me and to so many with whom I had met. So personal experience became immersion, challenge, and transformation.

Photographs

Returning to the more mundane topic of multiple sources of data and their relationships, in an historical study, photographs and documents can be especially helpful and available, as they were in this case. One person may remember things happening one way, or at one time, while someone else remembers them differently. Photographs, however, offer a visual and dated record, at least of things that have been captured photographically. For example, one person suggested that the chapel was such a strong symbol of Concord Academy that it was pictured in virtually every school yearbook and publication since the chapel's first days at C.A.. A careful review of past yearbooks revealed, however, that in the earliest days the chapel was almost completely absent from any yearbook. There was no picture or special mention of the chapel in the yearbooks of '56, '57, '59, '60, '61, or '62. I was particularly surprised by this, since these were the days when one would have assumed great excitement over the chapel's arrival and great pride in its construction. Perhaps those were present, but they were not evidenced through the yearbooks of the time.

Photographs also revealed chronological changes in the chapel. For example, while participants may not remember precisely when vestments stopped being worn in the chapel, yearbook photographs reveal that chapel speakers wore robes at least as late as 1969. Not seeing any robes pictured in yearbooks after that time helps bracket more precisely when they may have been given up.

A comparison of photographs used by the school over the years can also show shifts in emphasis or meaning. For example, the earliest photographs that appear in C.A. yearbooks show the chapel as a physical construction and carving project. Later shots reveal an artistic, evocative preoccupation, and most recently shots of students and faculty approaching or leaving the chapel en mass, or of a student giving a chapel appear alongside other picturesque shots of the building from a distance. The emphasis on people and on the interplay between community and individuality seems to have supplanted the thoughtful, artistic concern with introspection and isolation. But I presume a lot to make these claims based simply on my own responses to these images. Taken in concert with other sources, however, the more intuitive, qualitative interpretation of images can offer a further window into meaning and the evolution of symbols.

I should say, further, that taking photographs myself and using them with the project participants and in display offers yet another avenue <u>in</u> for the study and for those who might encounter or become a part of it. Pictures are an easy way in. In addition, photographs can have an evocative, holistic quality that allows them to capture qualities not readily conveyed through other media. Asking participants to help me select which photos to use for the exhibit allowed people to help identify some of what mattered to them about the chapel, especially as visually portrayed. This process also allowed for cumulative, collective choice and recognition, as people's selections were aggregated.

Exhibiting photos with words also presented the project suddenly as "ours" more than just as mine. Or perhaps I should say it presented my work as a reflection and compilation of others' words, as a visual and verbal mirror for the school. Of course people looked for their own words and their own images. I remember being surprised to see whole clusters of students sitting on the floor, huddling around a set of pictures of student chapels in progress, carefully identifying those pictured and giving delighted yelps on spotting themselves or their friends. By the same token, since the exhibit carried over through the years, as students became increasingly remote from those pictured, they

seemed less interested and even slightly offended that those pictured were exclsively from an earlier time. To some extent this revealed that people's enthusiasm initially may in large part have been simply to find themselves as the focus of the work.

Time Commitment

In closing this section on trustworthiness, the reader should know that my involvement with the project was extensive in terms of time as well. I spent at least two years gathering exposure, information, and experience in the setting, and then spent another two years working with the material and writing this document, albeit with a serious interruption of over a year due to severe back injury and surgery. The time gave me plenty of chance for reflection, but also meant that the more time went on, the more distant I was from the initial experience. Fortunately the site is readily available for visits and I have been back regularly both to visit and to speak annually at Alumnae Weekends.

From the standpoint of participant's involvement and my own immersion, however, the long time from the project's inception until now has created more distance than I would have liked. Ideally transcripts would have been completed with greater dispatch and returned to participants much sooner. Quicker time frames might have allowed for more extensive follow-up interviews and more of an active sense of ongoing engagement by participants. However, to achieve these, depth and breadth would doubtless have been sacrificed to speed. Sources would have been more constrained and incorporation of some of my favorite tools, like photography, might have been eliminated entirely.

So, while the time invested has made the study extensive and relatively thorough, it has not made it quick. Sometimes when people wonder why I am still at this, I think of Michelangelo and Vasari. Though a painter in Michelangelo's time, Vasari is remembered now primarily as a biographer of painters. At any rate, as Michelangelo's work gained acclaim, theories of art sprang up. People wanted to know how he worked. Art academies were established and artistic canons were confidently proclaimed.

One canon was that great art be produced quickly. Spontaneity and speed were prized, based on the mistaken assumption that the great Michelangelo painted quickly, when actually he worked quite laboriously. Word has it that one day Vasari, proud of his own recently completed frescoes, invited Michelangelo to see his work. Vasari reputedly proclaimed, "See, I did this in only three months!" Carefully surveying the chapel, Michaelangelo replied, "I can tell."

In Sum

In closing, let me say that when taken as a whole, from interviews, to photography and exhibit, to participating myself as both chapel giver and receiver, my methods do not roll easily into a ball, tightly wrapped and neatly labeled. Some of my decisions were ad hoc, responding to the pressures and opportunities of the moment. Some were taken with a leap of faith that somehow they would work out, although I had no confirmation of that beforehand. Some were pursued just because I felt like it.

I think that my own feeling of authenticity about this project and of involvement that was lived, breathed and connected still holds. For me that feels paramount and real — like the chapel, like Concord Academy, and like the human beings whom it has been my pleasure to come to know and to interact with through this study. I am a different person than I was when I started. Older, grayer, more tired — just kidding. Actually, I feel changed in fundamental ways that have everything to do with the people and place that are Concord Academy and the chapel. I feel more trusting of myself, more willing to risk, less ready to decide something is a risk before I try it.

But I'm getting ahead of myself in this story. Suffice it to say that carefully removed analytic reason and academic distance have never been my goal here. Connecting with people, trying to get at the heart of things, digging down and digging in — these keep my heart beating steady and make sure that my mind doesn't run off by itself.

CHAPTER 3

SETTING THE STAGE: THE SETTING, CAST OF CHARACTERS, & BUILDING

"This is the story of how we begin to remember."
— Paul Simon, "Graceland"

The Setting

Concord Academy

This study is a qualitative case study of a small, wooden chapel at a private, secondary, preparatory school, Concord Academy (C.A.), in Concord, Massachusetts. C.A. started in 1919 as an all-girls school with ten eighth grade students. In just a few years it grew to include an upper and lower school and grades one through twelve. During the 1950s it gradually dropped the lower school grades and by 1958 had consolidated as a prep school for girls in the 9th through 12th grades. In 1971 the school became co-ed, moving from a few boys early on to now roughly half boys and girls.

From a fledgling 10 students at first, C.A. grew to 156 students by 1928, to some 200 by the late 1950s. Now in the 1990s the school hosts over 300 students. Though started as a day school, boarders were taken in as early as 1922. For several decades boarders accounted for only about a quarter of the student body, until a conscious shift in the '50s and '60s to increase their numbers. Since then the school has been roughly half boarding and half day students.

The school is located in the heart of the small town of Concord, Massachusetts, famous for its pivotal role in the Revolutionary War. The Old North Bridge in Concord is reputed to be the site of the "shot heard round the world," the first shot of the Revolutionary War. The town has also gained prominence for its association with

American authors, Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau, all local residents. Thoreau's famous, Walden, was set in nearby Walden Pond, a few miles from the town. Thus Concord Academy's larger context calls up traditions of free thinking, independence, rebellion, and highly visible, outspoken, social commentary and critique. People lay claim to their ideas in Concord, Massachusetts.

Some Thoughts on Anonymity

The eagerness to claim one's own reality, to name it, own it, and take credit for it, by name, were powerful threads that I found running throughout Concord Academy, especially when talking with people about the chapel. When I asked Joanne Hoffman, Associate Head of C.A., whether I should use Concord Academy's actual name, or a pseudonym, in this writing, she said, "Definitely! Concord Academy. It's important to name ourselves. The chapel is C.A.! " The idea of anonymity seemed inappropriate and even demeaning.

I found the same reaction when asking people about using their own names or referring to them anonymously. A few examples of responses were, in this case, from students. My field notes from an interview with senior Amani Willett (C.A. '93) and a friend included this: "Interesting when I asked Amani about anonymity, he stood straighter, squared his shoulders and said, 'I'd like to use my name.'"

The most extended conversation I had about this was with a senior, Sharon Bergman, who had come out as a lesbian some time ago and by now had had extensive experience working publicly against homophobia. I include my own comments here, as well, so you can get the full flavor of our conversation — really more of a dialogue than an interview.

> Me: I'm doing this work at the School of Education at U. Mass, Amherst . . . and people there, they think, when you do this sort of research — they don't just think this, they vehemently believe this and vehemently cling to it — that whenever you actually write stuff down and use it in any way, whether it's even that exhibit, for example, or in the actual dissertation itself, that you should never attribute anything anyone says to the person. You should maintain total anonymity amongst the people you've talked with in order to protect the people that you've talked with.
>
> And I'm like, uhh (sighs), you know. . . Sort of, I don't get it, right. I never have. . . I think in part that people want to have their words attributed to them in

some ways. It's got partly to do with empowerment . . . in the same way as giving a chapel does. You know? But I need to get everybody's opinion about this because if I'm going to do it any differently, I need major ammo.

Sharon: Did you read my recent article in the Centipede [CA's student newspaper]? . . . I'll tell you this. I have gone to the Statehouse, gone to schools, gone to organizations, talked to the AP wire service, Channel 4 News, about my work with the Mass. Coalition of Lesbians and Gays uh . . . the Governor's Commission for Lesbian/Gay Youth . . . to which I am about to be appointed.

Me: I didn't even know there was such a thing.

Sharon: Well . . . there is one because we've been hocking him for so long. That's what all the various speeches and things were about. And every time I do an interview, every time I go and talk, people are always telling me (she adopts a patronizing tone now), "Now, you don't have to use your name, cause if you don't want to be attributed to this . . . that's fine with us." You know. And I think (whispering) what's the point? If I don't have enough chutzpah to use my name, then I have no business getting up and telling people anything about myself.

I had three phone calls from Eve Epstein of the Associated Press, three separate phone calls, to make sure that it was O.K. for her to use my full name in her international news wire hoo-ha thing, because her editor didn't believe it — could not conceive of the fact that this seventeen year old girl would be willing to have her name linked with her sexuality and her involvement in the gay community . . . in print, nationally. She had to tape the conversation to get permission for him to use my name. He wanted to make me anonymous, even when I wanted my name to be used.

. . . This article at school was, some person wrote an anonymous letter about the school was placing too much emphasis on homosexuality. And I wrote back and, before I even addressed the rest of the points in the article, I was like, first of all shame on you. Shame on you for not having the chutzpah to go ahead and stand up on what you believe in. I sleep very well at night, because I don't play games, not with that stuff. You know. . . .You say what you're gonna say and you take credit for it. . . .

Me: . . . It feels like to me in some ways, so long as people are anonymous, it keeps things as if there's something to hide. You know what I mean? It's a disempowering thing.

Sharon: There's just not as much power. There's not as much. Oh, you know, this twenty-nine year old white woman from Massachusetts says wra, wra, wra wra, wra.

Me: Right. Who is . . . she coulda been invented for all we know.

Sharon: Never mind! I wanna know that, you know, Judy Mills from Greenfield, Massachusetts sat down with you one day and said, "Look, this is how I feel."

Actually, during this entire study, there was only one person who requested anonymity, a person I had never met but had received a letter from, an alum from the mid-1980s.

Several people said they would prefer that I omit or edit certain segments from their interviews, largely in instances when they felt that their words might hurt someone's feelings or somehow demean another, or when their words conveyed meanings or attitudes they had not intended. These moments were rare with the first round of full transcripts and increased with the review of final drafts, where specific quotes were more carefully scrutinized by participants as impending publication seemed to raise the stakes.

In thinking about anonymity I can't help but think about visibility. To be anonymous is to be partly invisible. It seems antithetical to empowerment to me. Carolyn Heilbrun writes about this in her book, Writing A Woman's Life (1988), when she refers to F. Scott Fitzgerald's treatment of his wife Zelda, portrayed in the book Zelda by Nancy Milford (1970). She writes about:

> . . . F. Scott's assumption that he had a right to the life of his wife, Zelda, as artistic property. She went mad, confined to what Mark Schorer has called her ultimate anonymity — to be storyless. Anonymity, we have long believed, is the ultimate condition of woman. (p. 12)

To me it was heartening and natural that people at Concord Academy would want to be named, to be identified as who they were, claiming the first person — not some distant, unrecognizable, anesthetized third person, not some thing. I felt that way, too.

Much more than anonymity, people were concerned about their actual language — shocked at all their spoken "er's" and "um's" and incomplete sentences. A few took great pains to edit their language, anticipating later possible appearance in print. Many would have preferred that I edit out all the little "er's" and "um's" for the exhibit, where I had somewhat blithely quoted people verbatim. Although I checked beforehand for permission with each person quoted, I don't think they imagined my quotes would include every little quirk of speech. Some thought it undignified and were embarrassed to see their actual speech in print, whether in printed transcripts or enlarged for the exhibit. Because of that I have often omitted "er's" and "um's" in this paper and on request I have condensed or adjusted some quotes. One person requested such edits throughout to improve readability. When it seemed important, though, I have kept certain quotes completely intact, including

quirks of speech, however awkward. So you, too, dear reader, were considered. Now I return you to the story of the chapel, with all its texture, specificity, and real, live people.

Questions of Privilege & Oppression

Returning to the topic of participatory or interactive research, this case study does not focus on people who are overtly oppressed in the sense that we might normally consider. In a small, private, secondary school, the heritage and predominant class characteristic of the setting is privilege and, indeed, wealth. In fact, the earliest years of the school saw it educating exclusively white, upper and upper-middle class students, almost entirely WASPs. In the days when the chapel was brought down and reassembled, people distinctly remember the few Catholic students and the one Jewish student. The school was all girls at that time, was run by female administrators (except for the men on the Board of Trustees), and the teachers were predominantly women as well. Since that time the school has become co-educational and has dramatically diversified the student body to include people from a much wider range of races, incomes, and religious affiliations.

Nevertheless, one would still describe C.A. as a setting of privilege. Because of this, those who are less privileged in terms of race or income feel their differences keenly, as if those differences are set in bold type in a script otherwise more uniform, expected, and predominant. This relates also to those not in the dominant majority in terms of sexual orientation, religion, or culture. The setting puts those who are not the norm in bold relief and the differences stand out all the more, thus inviting questions and challenges around issues of inclusion and difference. So, in that sense, issues of oppression are present, although not necessarily predominant.

In addition, the early setting of women and girls was particularly intriguing in relation to architecture and building. Then, even more than now, the norm was that women and girls were specifically excluded from significant involvement with buildings until after they were built. Women were considered users of buildings, not designers or builders of them. Women were not considered wielders of hammers or trowels or crowbars. In general it is

not considered appropriate or usual for them to wield these things today, either. In fact, women's liberation and efforts toward inclusion notwithstanding, the latest counts show the building trades to have been little penetrated by women. A scant 2% of building trades people are women, as opposed to 26% for lawyers and 24% for doctors, and even close to 20% for architects (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996). Construction trades women even declined in recent years from 3% to 2%. Women may be barely permitted to design buildings, to think about them, but heaven forbid they should physically build them.. In the late 1950s, when the chapel was dismantled and reconstructed, women would have accounted for 0% of building trades people and this would not have been considered an issue of interest. So, to the extent that this study deals with women and girls and building, it deals with issues of exclusion, male dominance, and gender bias and stereotyping.

In addition, issues of oppression and liberation associated with age are primary. In this setting primarily of teenagers, issues of respect, identity and opportunity for voice and for action are central. Issues are raised around who speaks, what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and what is considered allowable or taboo in public discourse, display, and action. Associated with this are concerns about ways of knowing and communicating, about the relationship between individuality and community, and about the dynamic interplay between freedom and constraint. Issues of contested terrain, ownership, and license also come to the fore. All of these are enmeshed in the themes of empowerment and power, as the analysis chapters of this dissertation will develop in more detail.

As we will see, from the earliest days of the chapel's arrival at C.A. issues of inclusion, identity, and difference rose to the fore. These are still being debated and wrestled with today. The chapel as a microcosm and a focal point offers an opportunity to see these issues at play in a particular and intense setting, emblematic of their emergence in the larger school community of Concord Academy as well as in society at large. Keeping these things in mind, we will move on to explore what went on in the chapel over the years and what people involved have to say about it.

The Chapel

Early History. This study focuses on Concord Academy's chapel, found as an abandoned building in New Hampshire in 1956 and moved to the school in 1958, where it was reconstructed, rehabilitated, and modified for the school's use. The small, Quaker-like building was originally built in 1843 as a community church and meeting house, in a place called Snackerty (or Snackitty) Brook, between Strafford and West Barnstead, New Hampshire. It later became the No. Strafford and Barnstead Baptist Church. For reasons not entirely clear, but partly associated with population loss, by the 1930s the building had fallen into infrequent use until eventually it was abandoned altogether as an active church or meeting place. Later in the 1950s, in hopes of saving the building, it was sold to an antiquarian who specialized in buying and selling historic buildings so that they could be restored and saved.

Story of the Move to Concord. Then begins the story that is told and retold at Concord Academy. In 1954 the local fire inspector, one Mr. Boileau (pronounced Bowleeo by the man himself), arrived at the academy one day and promptly announced that the Assembly Hall chairs would have to be tied together and bolted to the floor or the Assembly would be closed because it was deemed a fire hazard. As Mrs. Hall, Head-mistress then, tells it, "Mr. Boileau turned up at every awkward moment. He must have sat at home and studied the moments he could give me a hard time." Thinking that bolting the chairs would be an ugly abomination, after considerable consternation Mrs. Hall located and bought a full complement of Windsor benches for the Assembly. No sooner had she purchased the benches, when Doreen Young, her colleague, teacher, and friend, called to announce that she had located church pews for sale in New Hampshire. Mrs. Hall recounts her response as "Don't tell me about pews! I've just spent fifteen hundred dollars of the Academy's hard earned money on Windsor benches. I don't want to hear a word about church pews!"

Miss Young, however, was not easily put off. She insisted that the least Mrs. Hall could do would be to go take a look. Besides, she is reputed to have said, "It won't cost you any more than a tank of gas to go up and have a look." On arrival, they found both pews and building in sad disrepair. The pews were available for a reasonable $1,000 or so, but, the seller announced, for $1500 they could have the pews and the entire building. Mrs. Hall recalls how, as they drove away from that visit, her husband, Livy, remarked, "Well, it's nice to know definitely that it's nothing we want to buy. We've saved ourselves $1500," (Hall, 1962, p. 3) (see figure 3.1 below).

Figure 3.1. The Snackerty Brook Meeting House. Found in 1954, Barnstead, N.H.

Actually, Mrs. Hall had long dreamed of something like a chapel for the school, someplace where people could escape from the hurley-burley of daily school life and seek quiet, self-reflection, privacy. Before long they had not only bought the pews but purchased the building as well. The papers were signed on November 5, 1954. Then

came the journeys up to New Hamsphire to haul down pews in the backs of pick-up trucks and station wagons. Parents, students, friends, and faculty were all in on the act.

As the pews began to be cleared out and brought down to Concord, Mrs. Hall recalls students, who had been in on the trips to New Hampshire, moaning to her that the building was lonely left up there all by itself. Pressing her, they pleaded, "Couldn't we bring the building down, too?" In the spring of 1956 Mrs. Hall, Miss Young, and Bill Eddy, a C.A. English teacher, devised a scheme of going up themselves that summer, bringing their spouses, camping out, taking the building down piece by piece, hauling it back down to Concord, and reassembling it.

Those consulted cautioned against the project as of uncertain outcome and incalculable expense. In the end, no trustees were officially consulted, no permission granted. As Mrs. Hall recounts, "It was a <u>just do it</u> thing!" Spouses were enlisted to help. One student, Belinda Burley, came along, first for a week or so, and then stayed for the whole enterprise. None in this stalwart band were professional builders or architects, none schooled in building or in undoing and redoing buildings, although Miss Young had disassembled, moved, and reconstructed her own house not long before. In addition, a young man named Connie White came along and was reputed to know some carpentry.

So up went this motley crew in the summer of 1956. Then, over the next several weeks, they took the building down, carefully numbering all the pieces and making meticulous maps showing where each number belonged. Panes of original wavy glass were saved with painstaking care. Huge ceiling beams and trusses were taken down. Even the original foundation stones were carted down to Concord.

At C.A. the pieces were deposited at the end of the formal garden and reconstruction began that same summer, rented crane for the roof trusses and all (see figures 3.2 & 3.3).

> All the orderly piles which Belinda had made in Barnstead were now jumbled in confusion as the men tossed their loads off at the spot I designated. How could I proceed further without permission of the Trustees? From now on we would have to spend money. But if people had been skeptical when they saw the church standing in Barnstead, how could I possibly persuade anyone that this was a church? Better not to ask. This was the real moment of commitment. Let's put it

up fast. If we get it up before anyone returns to school, maybe they can see what it is and the money will come. If they don't like it, we know how to take it down. (Harde, 1984, p. 13)

So goes the account of the early chapel adventure in C.A.'s booklet about the chapel move.

Figure 3.2. Early Reconstruction. ". . . people. . . could be heard asking each other why the Academy was putting up 'that awful old barn right in the middle of the garden.'" (Harde, 1982)

By late August the building shell was intact (see figure 3.4). Mrs. Hall writes,

> Six weeks after the truck journey from Barnstead, the last piece from the original church was put back in place, and the roof was shingled with new cedar shingles hand-dipped to a weathered gray. Our work was finished. We had done what only we who had taken it down could do; we had reassembled from the pile of junk on the lawn the essential structure of the old church. The rest would have to be done by professionals if and when sufficient money could be raised. (Hall, 1962, p. 16)

CA archival photographs included here show the early reconstruction days at Concord with the Eddy's carrying a huge chapel timber (figure 3.3), the crane lifting roof trusses into place (figure 3.2), and the final barn-like shell enclosed (figure 3.4).

Figure 3.3. Bill & Beryl Eddy Working on Reconstruction

Figure 3.4. Shell Enclosed. "We had reassembled from the pile of junk on the lawn the essential structure of the old church," September, 1956. (Harde, 1984, p. 17)

Exterior and interior work continued into the fall. Everyone enthusiastically sanded and oiled the pews, bringing them back to life. Students painted all the chapel's clap-boards, front side and back. Modifications included changing two side doors to one central one and adding a vestibule, stairs, and a balcony level. Under the watchful eye of Mrs. Hall and others, these were designed by a local architect and added by builders.

C.A.'s First Chapel Service. By that first Christmas the school celebrated the chapel by holding the first "service" there, amidst hay bales and ongoing construction. Sylvia Mendenhall, a C.A. English teacher since 1956, recalls:

> Then there was a Christmas service . . . which is a very important moment in the history of the chapel, when, instead of having the Christmas service where they usually had it, which I guess was Assembly Hall, they had it in the unfinished chapel. And everybody sat around on the beams and piles of straw and so on, just informally there. So it wasn't done. It had no electricity. I mean, people had candles. (inaudible). . . fire hazard (inaudible). . . Mrs. Hall style. And they sang carols. . . . It was a very special Christmas time kind of thing, using the chapel when it really wasn't ready for the school to use. But it was ready enough so that there was a roof over one's head. And it was certainly a very important moment, when people came together to celebrate a new beginning and a kind of miracle, a rebirth of an old building to begin a new era in the life of the school.

The Chapel was to be fully opened for regular use by late the following spring.

The Carving. During the winter and spring of that same school year (1956-'57) under the direction of Molly Gregory, the school's woodworking teacher, the girls carved a huge architectural scale carving to hang inside at the front of the chapel — Paul's letter to the Corinthians, found in the Bible in 1st Corinthians 13. A centerpiece to the chapel, the text is pictured below as it appears in the carving. Those familiar with the King James version of the Bible may expect to see the word "charity" here, however "love" is an qually apt translation, and is used instead of "charity" in Concord Academy's carving. To understand the project's scope, the reader should note that the carving is about 10 feet in height and width and hangs in the center of the front wall of the chapel, directly above the "altar". The whole front carving, with borders and side angels included, took two years.

THOUGH I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN
AND OF ANGELS, AND HAVE NOT LOVE,
I AM AS SOUNDING BRASS OR A TINKLING
CYMBAL. AND THOUGH I HAVE THE GIFT OF
PROPHECY, AND UNDERSTAND ALL MYSTERIES,
AND ALL KNOWLEDGE, AND THOUGH I HAVE
ALL FAITH SO THAT I COULD REMOVE
MOUNTAINS, AND HAVE NOT LOVE,
I AM NOTHING.
AND THOUGH I BESTOW ALL MY GOODS
TO FEED THE POOR, AND THOUGH
I GIVE MY BODY TO BE BURNED, AND
HAVE NOT LOVE, IT PROFITETH ME NOTHING.
LOVE SUFFERETH LONG AND IS KIND,
LOVE ENVIETH NOT,
LOVE VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP,
DOTH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY,
SEEKETH NOT HER OWN, IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED,
THINKETH NO EVIL,
REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY, BUT
REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH,
BEARETH ALL THINGS, BELIEVETH ALL THINGS,
HOPETH ALL THINGS, ENDURETH ALL THINGS,
LOVE NEVER FAILETH.

The next shot gives some sense of the carving's scale, with a part of it visible behind alumnae speakers gathered in the chapel on Alumnae Day (figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Alumnae Speakers & Corinthians Carving

In woodworking they built music stands and an altar for the front, replete with decorative carvings. Later in 1961, still under Molly Gregory's direction, students built and added an entire steeple for the building, designed by Bob Lloyd, who worked with Molly. As seen in figure 3.6 the steeple had a dramatic and church-like visual effect.

Regular Chapel "Services" & Senior Chapels. Furthermore, the school immediately instituted a policy of seniors "giving chapels." Each senior was required in the early days, and now volunteers, to stand before the entire school and take charge of a chapel service. At first these were replete with religious trappings, including a choir and choir robes, hymns, prayers, and biblical readings, all with Episcopal overtones and roots. Now they are more sacred than explicitly religious and to a large extent people consider them secular — what one person described as "sacred with a small 's.'" But now they have gained all the more in personal and community import, as to give a chapel now is considered a pivotal rite of passage, really the central rite of passage in the life of a student at Concord Academy. Each student, with rare exceptions, comes before the entire school of faculty, administration, and students, and gives a fifteen minute "Who am I?" presentation. Faculty and administrators periodically also "give" chapels.

Figure 3.6. The Chapel with New Steeple, 1961

The Chapel as a Building

What is the chapel like as a building? Those familiar with private boarding schools and school chapels may conjure up massive stone structures, replete with magnificent stained glass windows and soaring arches inside and out. The tradition of most school chapels is to be imposing, rock solid, built to impress and meant to last. The Concord Academy Chapel, now named the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel, is by contrast modest, unimposing, and simple. From a distance it seems almost too small for a school chapel — diminutive, set off, as it is, by itself.

The Site: The Chapel Set Apart

All the other school buildings are clustered or linked or surrounded with neighboring buildings. The dorms are colonial homes along Main Street, one comfortably next to the other. The Administration and Admissions Offices are tucked in next to the dorms in one of these old colonials. Set back, behind the dorms and off the main street are the main school classrooms, with north and south wings, linked through the library. The north wing connects directly to the dining area and student faculty center, which is further linked to the performing arts center. A main green is flanked by administrative and dorm buildings on one side, the main classroom building on another, the science wing of the main building on a third side, and the new math and art center on the fourth side. Behind that is a 1950s style brick building housing extra classrooms, the gym, and the infirmary.

But the chapel is all by itself. It sits at the far end of what was once the formal garden for the school, now called the Senior Lawn or Garden, shown in the middle left on the map on the next page (figure 3.7). Visually the chapel is buffered from much of the busiest part of the school, with high hedges walling off the lawn and big trees coming between the chapel and the rest of the school. Uninterrupted grass leads up to the chapel and extends past it to the playing field bordered by the Sudbury River. Flanked by trees and small bushes, and separated by lots of grass, the chapel sits alone.

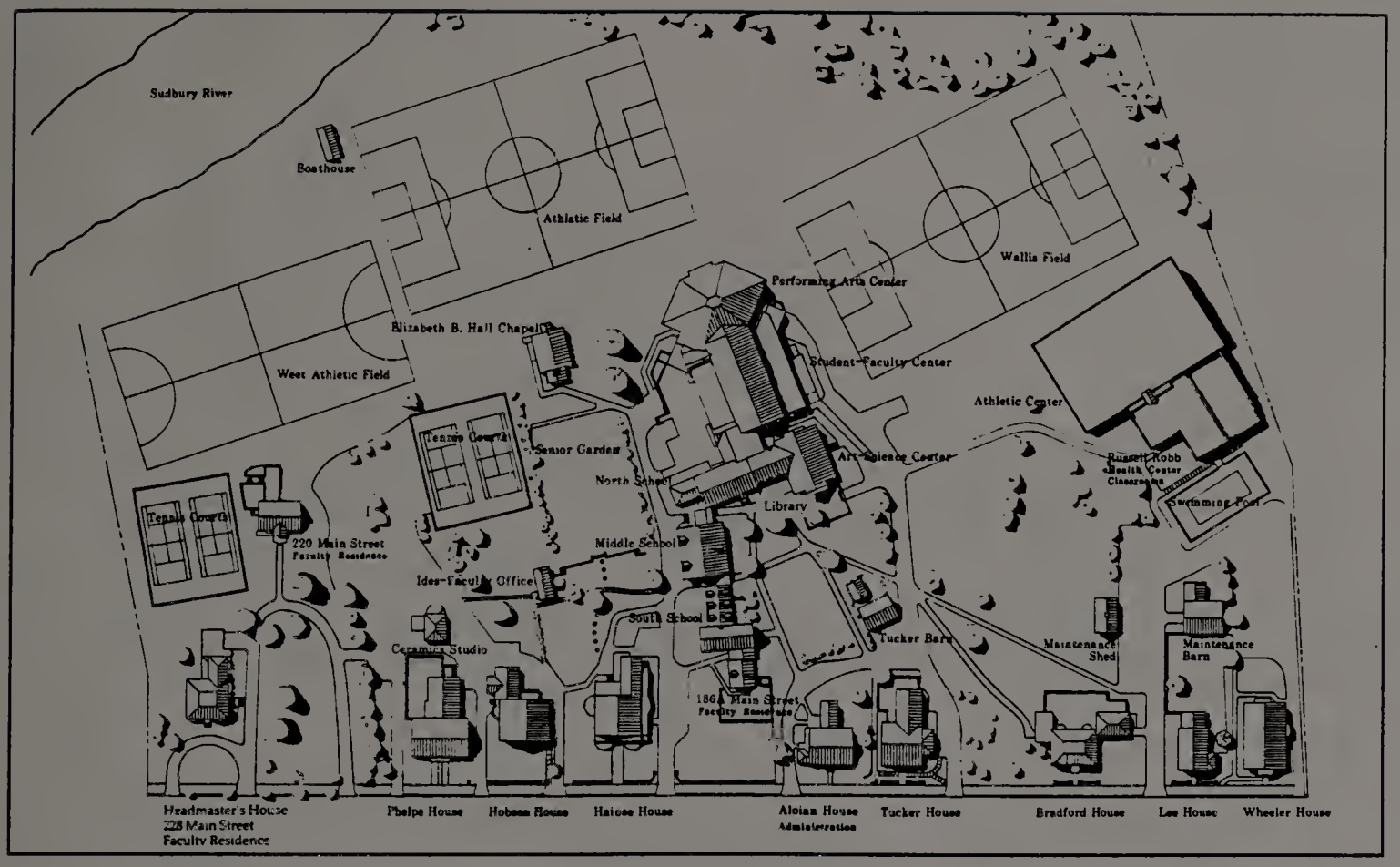

Figure 3.7. Concord Academy Campus in '91. The chapel is toward the upper left.

It is reached by a small footpath, coming from the side, rather than from a front axis right down the Senior Lawn. So even the approach is intimate and episodic, "the oblique sidestep that delays the approach and reveals new perspectives of experience" (Lawlor, 1994, p. 20). The chapel gradually comes into view behind the bushes and trees that shield it. When you arrive, you are already close, personal. Only the chapel and the boathouse have no direct vehicular access, so this, too, makes it more personal and intimate. You don't just happen by the chapel. You go out of your way to get there. It is not on your way to someplace else. And you walk there. Only the nearby tennis courts seem to encroach on the quiet, set apart sense that envelopes the chapel. It feels unassailed and safely in a world of its own, comforting in its distance from the hubbub (figure 3.8).

This is what Mrs. Hall was hoping for when she envisioned the chapel as a respite and refuge from the crowds and the hurley burley. Mrs. Hall describes her hopes for a place of refuge in C.A.'s booklet on the chapel,

> There was no space for quiet in a crowded school. In 1954 only the boarder with the luck to be assigned to one of the few single rooms in the Academy had any place where she could be alone. Even then she was at the mercy of the general lack of respect for privacy typical of boarding school. How could there be any respect for privacy when the circumstance provided for boarders suggested strongly that there was no value in privacy, quiet, reflection, and contemplation? The thought was continuously worrisome.
>
> From time to time, on a quiet walk of my own by the river, I would come upon an Academy girl sitting by herself, watching the water. Always there was the embarrassed confusion at being discovered in the act of doing that which she clearly thought was regarded as unusual. Always there followed the explanation, disturbingly defensive, that it wasn't that she was unhappy, she just wanted to be alone for a while, and "it was so beautiful." Where did they go, these individuals with an appreciation of solitude, when the long New England winter made the banks of the Sudbury River untenable? Slowly the idea of a school chapel had been taking form in my mind. (Harde, 1984, p. 1)

Modifications to the Original Building

Seeing the chapel from a distance, one might be struck by the curved steeple or round window above the doors — neither strikes a typical New England chord. Indeed, both the steeple and front vestibule structure were added to the original large, plain, boxy New Hampshire building. Though the building was moved and reassembled with great attention to the original, the end wall was changed to accommodate a vestibule and balcony so that the whole school would fit inside. Pictured as completed in 1957 (figure 3.9), the chapel would remain this way for the next four years, as alumnae from that time may best remember it.

Viewed from the side and steepleless (figure 3.10), the chapel looks most like the original Snackerty Brook Meeting House, reminiscent of New England churches, granges, and meeting houses in general for that period. The expanse of plain white clapboard wall is broken only by three tall, simple, paned windows, still with their original wavy glass.

Figure 3.8. The Solitary Chapel Seen from the Senior Steps.

Figure 3.9. The Chapel with Vestibule. Completed 1957

Figure 3.10 The Grange-like Chapel Side Wall with Windows.

Inside the Chapel: Light, Wood, & Simplicity

When people think of the chapel as a building, however, most of them talk about the inside, not the outside. They talk about the warm, pungent smell of wood when you first enter and see light streaming in from the tall, clear windows. They mention how the light plays on the rich, brown wood of the pews. Inside the chapel is a clear contrast to the lofty stone edifices of so many private boarding schools. Rather than cold, hard, remote stone and elaborate stained glass, the inside of this chapel is wood, plaster, and plain, clear glass.

There is no pretense of transforming the light into myriad hues or of keeping the outside from penetrating into the chapel. No, sunlight is welcome and clear in the Concord chapel — unadorned. It warms both the people and the wood it falls on— wood warmed to a deep reddish-brown in the sun as its smooth, oiled surfaces catch the light and seem to absorb its glow (figure 3.12). Light plays on the row of pews and on the wall — a partner in the space (figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11. Light Alive in the Chapel Space

"The constantly changing play of sunlight throughout the day and year transforms buildings from lumps of dead matter into vital structures filled with life" (Lawlor, 1994).

Figure 3.12. Chapel Pews Aglow.

Inside the chapel is simple, elemental, straight-forward, like a Quaker meeting house. The windows and pews stand out — unadorned, straight and rectangular (figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13. Straight-backed Wooden Pews and Chapel Window

Only the curved side-ends of each pew and the top edge of the backs break the otherwise straight, rectangular, utterly simple lines and shapes. These well worn curves welcome the many hands that touch the chapel — made to be touched, warm to the touch, and smooth (figure 3.14). Even the colors inside speak of early New England churches — simple white plaster walls and warm, plain, brown wood — the two setting each other off starkly. The scale, too, is simple, small, unassuming. The pews seat four and at most, in a squeeze, five apiece. It is a cozy, intimate, immediate place, one where you can look people in the eye.

Figure 3.14. Smooth, Curved Ends and Backs of Pews

Besides letting light in, the windows offer views of the outside, too. From standing inside, one can see the grass and trees outside, and from sitting one can view the trees and sky — a welcome connection (see figures 3.15 & 3.16 on the next page). They remind one that the chapel is connected. It is not the kind of space that closes itself off or that lets light in only from the lofty reaches, cloistering our view. Admissions

Administrator Linda Whitlock remarks that the chapel is ". . . embracing . . . simple . . . unadorned. . . . There's a lot of light because of the enormous windows, uncovered windows." Alumna, Rachael Duane Lee, '66, mentions how fondly she thinks of sitting in the chapel and seeing trees through the windows, rather than the ground or people walking by — trees, and all the while surrounded by the fragrance of wood in the chapel. Entering the chapel, I realize suddenly how evocative and immediate that wood scent is.

Figure 3.15. A Chapel Window's View

Figure 3.16. Silhouetted Podium and Trees Beyond.

Up at the front of the chapel lies a raised platform, where a carved altar stands, below the great Corinthians 1:13 carving. Just to the right stands the podium, up a few steps and

level with the platform. One of the tall front windows silhouettes the speaker and the podium, the outside light and window offering a natural backdrop for the speaker and a ready reminder of light linking the inside and outside (see figure 3.17). Raised up just a few steps, the podium lets the speaker look out over the assembly, seeing everyone there, just as they, in turn, can see the speaker.

Figure 3.17. The Podium Awaits a Speaker.

Another major feature of the chapel space is the beams. Originally plastered over, the beam were hidden until uncovered by the Concord Academy crew when they began taking the building apart in New Hampshire. Made of rough-hewn, dark wood, with visible interlocking wooden joints, the beams span the entire ceiling and space in big triangulated

trusses. Not easy to capture photographically, you can nevertheless get some sense of the beams from the shot of the chapel on page 113 (figure 4.8). Dramatic and solid, they give the chapel strength. Noah Fisk, a junior at the school in 1992 and also my son, remarked,

> I think the beams are cool for the space. I don't know what they do to the space. They sort of open it up and yet they kind of bring the whole building together. So it's like a safe, yet free quality. You feel like it's solid, too, even though it's old.

Antoinette Winters had her students tackle drawing the inside of the chapel. Her colleague Jessica Strauss had first thought of using the chapel for drawing classes because, Antoinette thought, "It's the only building we have that's really accessible architecturally." She described how critical the exposed beams are to revealing how the building works structurally. You can understand how it's put together and held up. You can actually see it (fig. 3.18). I remember sitting in the chapel as a student, myself, gazing up at the beams and immediately thinking of the story of the building being taken down and put back up. Somehow, for me, the visual presence of the beams brought it all back home. As Noah said, they tie the whole building together.

From up in the balcony you can easily reach out and touch the beams. Several times I was sitting quietly in the chapel when parents came in on a school tour. Often they would go up to the balcony and survey the space below. When they did, one or both of the parents would usually reach out and feel the beams — connecting. In my fieldnotes I comment, "Again it strikes me how touchable the chapel is. You can touch these beams, only 6 feet or so from the upper floor, can see the wood interlocking, the rough hewn contours of the beams, the chisel marks — no smooth, machine-sharp edges or planes."

Figure 3.18. Interlocking Beams

Wood, plaster, glass and light. Scale, too. This is a small space, easy to comprehend, to take in at a glance. It is easy to feel that you fit. In talking about physical spaces, Janet Eisendrath, C.A. history and history of art teacher, had asked her students about what place most meant Concord Academy to them and found "to my surprise chapel was far and away the first choice." She pressed students further on what it is that they like about spaces. Then she talked about how people like to feel that they fit. They like snuggling. As Janet described it:

> I notice in the reading room people get their own special little carrels. So it sometimes doesn't make any difference how big the room is, we still carve out our own little room . . . [re. the chapel] Even within a crowded space, we have a lot of spaces. Seniors sit here and the juniors sit here and the freshmen sit here

> and the sophomores sit here. And even within those there will be some people that will sit in the first row. Some people always sit in the back row. So, whatever the limits are, I think we still do that. . . . When I asked the class about its [the chapel's] size and they liked its being too small for us — in a way you could say that becomes the niche for the whole school.

To give you an idea of how the space is laid out and how the addition fits in with the original space, below is a rough sketch of the interior of the chapel (Figure 3.19). You can see how the added vestibule sits apart from the main space and provides access to the balcony level. This should also make it clear how inside, the chapel's main space is very much as if it were the original space. This sketch should give some sense also of how the balcony relates to the main space and of how central the Corinthians carving is to the space. Perhaps you can sense the intimate, nestled feeling as well.

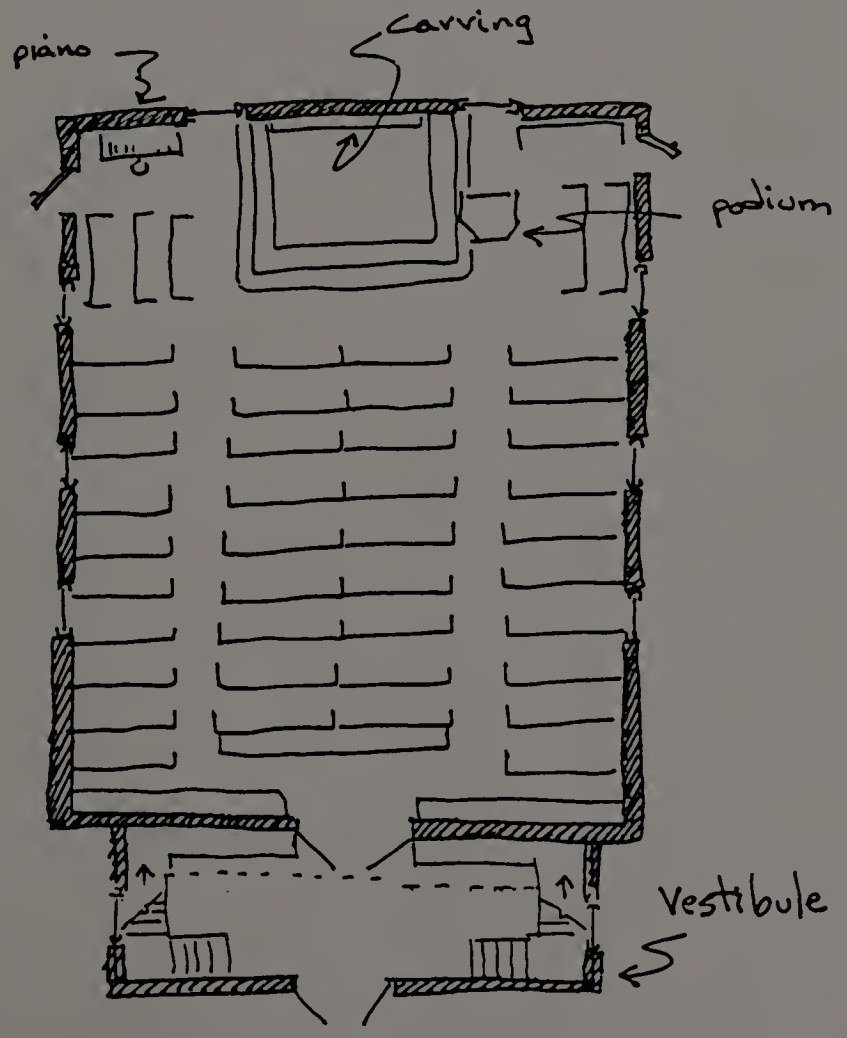

Figure 3.19. Sketch of Chapel Floor Plan

While this chapter has tried to give you some sense of the physical nature of the chapel and its qualitative characteristics, this in only one part of the story. What happens in the chapel, how its uses have evolved over the years and how people construct meaning from the chapel and their relationship to it — more than that, how they invest the chapel with meaning and how the chapel pays back on that investment — all still remain to be told.

The chapters to come will explore the evolution of the chapel in use at C.A., both at single points in time and through time. Listening to the voices and stories of those who lived through those times will give us an opportunity to vicariously share in some of what the chapel has been as an experience for individuals and for the school community. We should gain a window into the evolution of some of the chapel's meanings and symbolic functions over time and see how it has been both contested and celebrated over the years.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHAPEL IN ACTION & MEANING

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

— T. S. Eliot, excerpt from East Coker, Four Quartets, 1943

Prelude: Not "Just the Facts Ma'am"

The chapel at Concord Academy goes beyond architectural details and physical description. It goes way past dimensions, lists of materials and particular facts and figures. No one I spoke with about the chapel was simply matter of fact. No. When I asked people what the chapel meant to them, they were touching, moving, and almost always speaking not just from the head, but incredibly richly and warmly from the heart. They spoke easily and intimately about the most dear and personal moments for them and about why they love this chapel as they do. They took my breath away and still do.

I hope to share something of their stories with you here, taking you on a journey back in time, to the chapel's beginnings at Concord Academy and working our way up through time, seeing the chapel through the eyes of those who saw things with their own eyes and still see them in their mind's eye. We will explore how chapel rituals and meanings changed over time and with the times. We will consider some of the psychological underpinnings of chapel experiences, paying special attention to the role of disclosures in development. And we will consider how the chapel fosters both personal and community intimacy.

Part of the interest of this chapter is in the various perspectives people hold about the chapel and how their personal and community experiences strongly influence their present relationship to the chapel and their entire conception of it. So we will explore some of the differences in perspective and meaning that people hold in relation to the chapel. Special attention is also given here to the carvers, early chapel builders, and C.A. alumnae from that time, asking how they feel about the chapel and about their involvement with the rebuilding, moving, or carving.

I say "we" here deliberately. This study incorporates both my voice and the voices of a host of people I encountered along the way. This is their story, in many ways, more than mine. If I choose to retell their stories selectively, arranged in a certain order, with particular intentions, and in relation to specific ideas and perspectives, of course the telling becomes mine. The orchestration and fitting together and weaving become mine. But many times the people involved with me in this study also suggested how to weave, what to look for, and how it all fits together. You, too, are a part of that weaving process, or I invite you to be. I say we because this has been and continues to be a collaborative search. I say we because I want you to explore here, too. I want you to consider with me, with us. I want you to jump all the way in.

The Chapel as Symbol of Concord Academy

Some of the most powerful things people had to say referred to the chapel as a whole.

> Concord Academy is about people, not about buildings . . . except for this building. — Tom Wilcox, Headmaster

> It's the outward and visible sign of something that's so fundamental to the spirit and the ethos of the school. — Marion Ferguson, Alumna, '63

> I describe the chapel and I mean, then, the giving of chapels as well as the actual building, as the personification of Concord Academy.
> — Linda Whitlock, Admissions

I would say this, that whatever it is, I think it's sacred to Concord Academy. And I think the chapel strikes about as close to the bone as you can get to what is the essence of this school. I think that chapel, in a sense, is what Concord Academy's all about. — Clare Nunes, English Teacher

It is a very simple, modest structure, more precious than any other building on campus, because of what its walls have heard.
— Ron Richardson, French Teacher

I'm not going to miss the physical space of Concord at all, except the chapel.
— Sharon Bergman, Senior, '92

Just physically, I think whenever I will think of C.A., I'll envision that white building and Senior Chapel Lawn. — Amani Willett, Senior '93

The Concord Academy Chapel is the place where C.A. shows itself at its best.
— Joanne Hoffman, Assistant Director

I think it's the central ritual of the student's career at Concord Academy — the chapel. — Kevin Jennings, History Teacher

If we have any doubt of the chapel serving as a powerful symbol for Concord Academy, we have only to glance at the host of school publications that deliberately highlight the chapel, from alumnae magazines and mailings to school catalogs and yearbooks. As a symbol and visual image, the chapel appears and reappears with predictable regularity in C.A. publications. Sometimes the building is seen through a tree in the foreground, yielding an evocative, spiritual quality, as in the opening photograph for this paper which has appeared in several C.A. publications over a wide span of years. Another publications favorite shows the daily pilgrimage to and from the chapel (see figure 4.1), underscoring how the chapel brings the whole community together. The chapel is one of the only things to which C.A. publications routinely devote a full page. In alumnae publications it frequently fills the entire inside cover and closes the publication as well. Yearbooks, too, often honor the chapel with entire opening or closing pages. Clearly the school sees the chapel as a symbol — one that signifies the <u>whole</u> community. Furthermore, the chapel is given special significance for alumnae, whose publications abound with chapel images.

For illustration, pictures from C.A. publications follow (figures 4.1 - 4.5). The pilgrimage picture (figure 4.1) has been in Alumnae magazines, school catalogs, and

fundraising flyers. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show closing pages of Alumnae Magazines, seeking bequests, as if the chapel is an alumnae legacy and sign of alumnae/i ongoing connections to C.A. The last image here (figure 4.5) pictures the front of a C.A. reunion program.

Figure 4.1. Morning Pilgrimage Leaves the Chapel

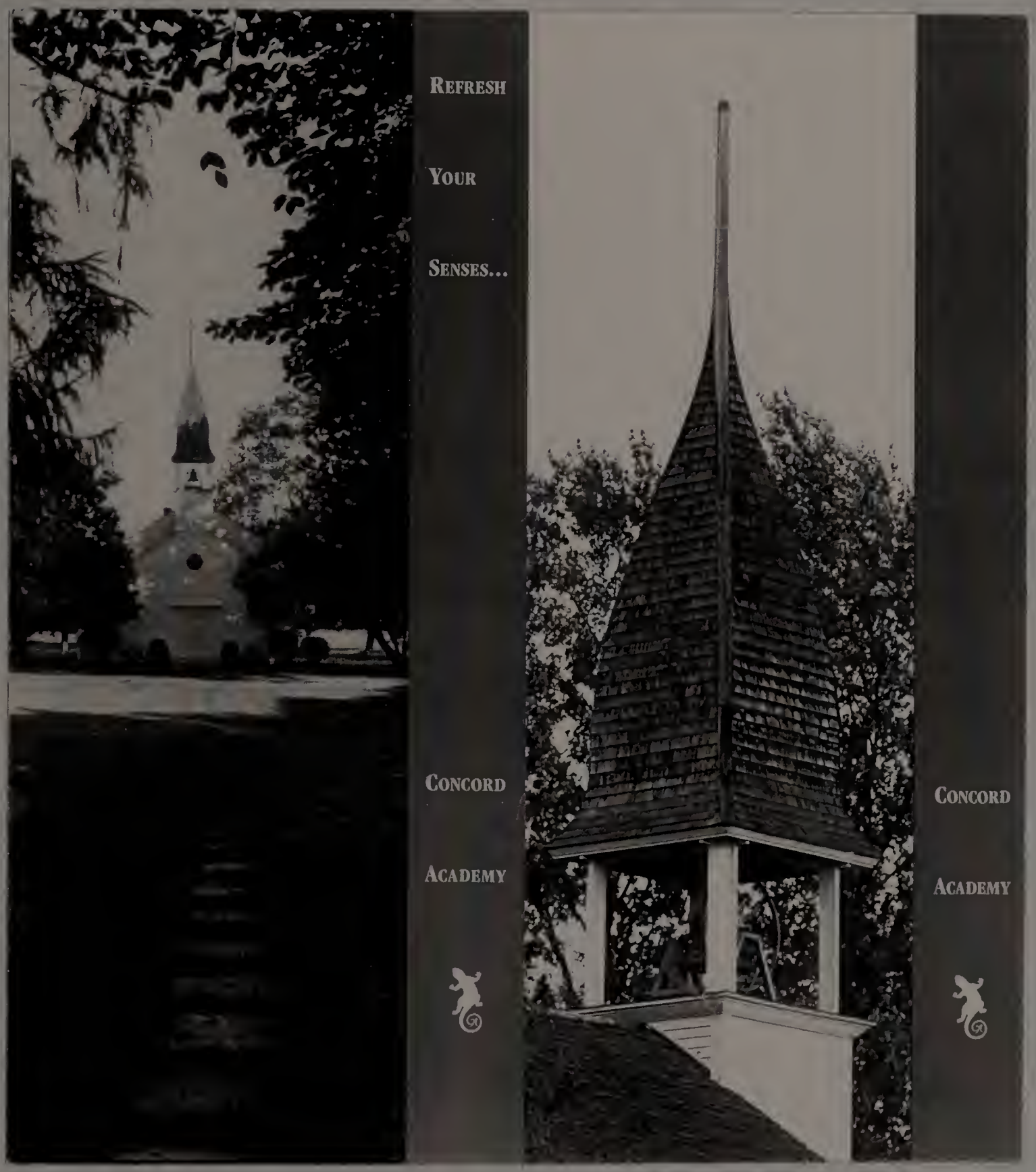

Figure 4.2. Two C.A. Fund-Raising Flyers Sent to Alumnae

Bequests to Concord Academy:
The Cornerstone

The long-term financial well-being of almost every school depends upon its endowment. Endowment allows the school to fund programs, to keep pace with inflation, and to weather economic storms. Concord Academy must increase its endowment to maintain its tradition of excellence.

Gifts through wills (bequests) continue to be the primary source of endowment at schools, colleges, and universities across the United States.

As you plan your bequest, you will want to consider your family's financial security, your tax liabilities, and the benefits you can provide to Concord Academy and other charities.

There are various ways of making a bequest to Concord Academy:

- A gift of cash, securities, or real property.
- A specified percentage of your estate.
- A contingent bequest naming Concord Academy in your will if other beneficiaries are no longer living.

Leaving a percentage of your estate to non-profit organizations has particular advantages. It ensures that whether your estate increases or decreases during your lifetime, the same relative portion of your estate will be directed to charitable causes; percentages protect family members' portions of the donor's estate.

A contingent bequest also has advantages. For example, you may wish to name as the primary beneficiary a family member who may not survive you. A contingent bequest will not deprive your family, and will prevent your assets from going to the state for lack of heirs.

Bequests reduce estate and inheritance taxes. Under current tax law, this can be a significant consideration for those with sizable estates.

You may wish to consult your attorney to decide which vehicle best suits your needs. Please feel free to put your attorney in touch with the school; the development office can provide specific wording.

Please remember that a bequest, no matter the size, will help Concord Academy continue to flourish.

Figure 4.3. Alumnae Magazine Closes with Chapel Legacy. (Summer '92)

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Editor: John Wald
Design: Jeanne Abboud
Photography: John Wald;
Huston Westover, f/stop Pictures (cover);
Gabriel Cooney (p.13 top, p.45, p.20);
Squirrel Graphics (p.23).

Figure 4.4. An Alumnae/i Magazine's Last Page. Ironic Commentary Perhaps?

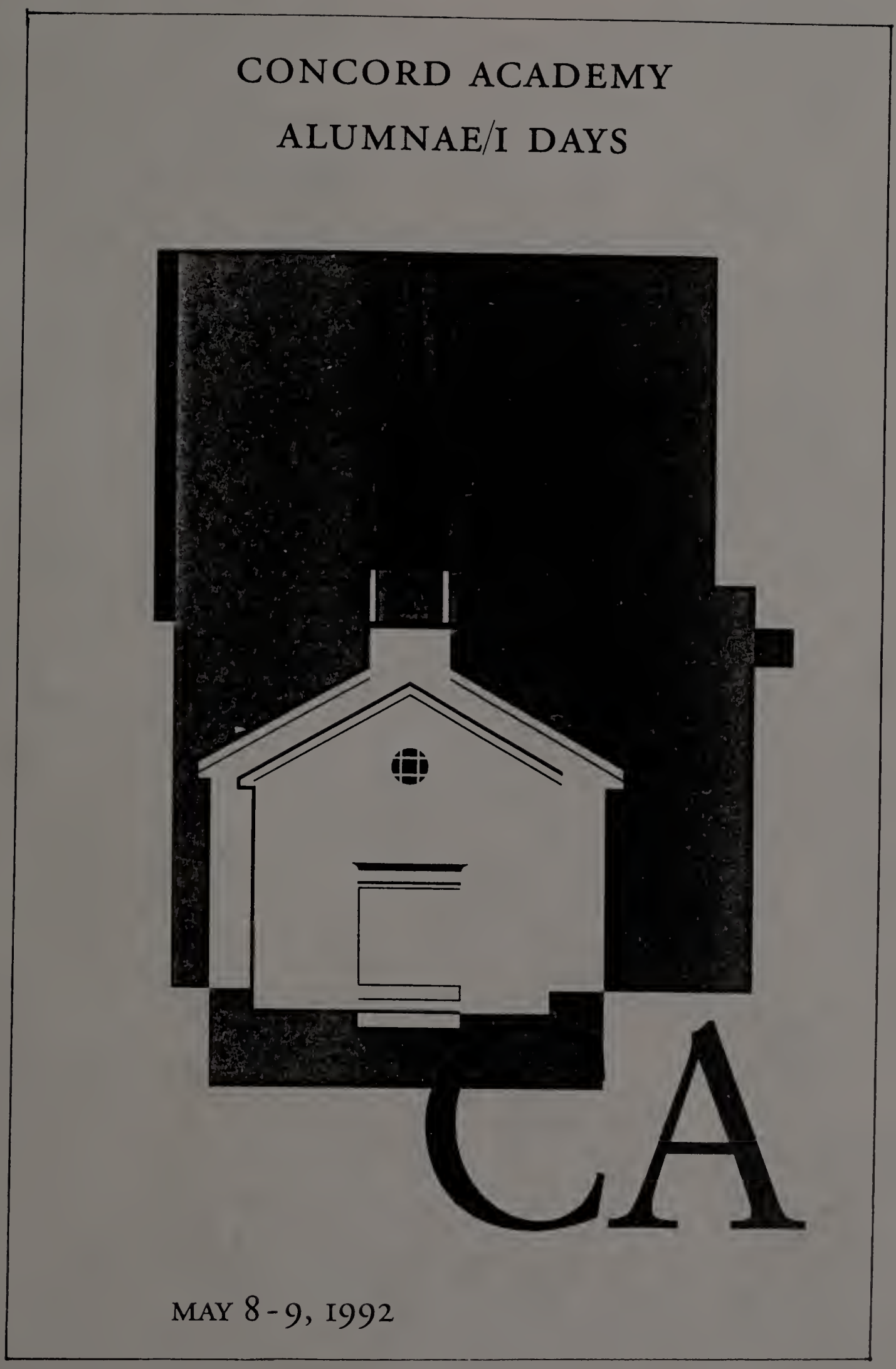


Figure 4.5. Program Cover for Alumnae/i Reunion, 1992.

Evocative and symbolic as these may be, they all show the outside of the chapel, not what goes on inside the building or what has been put into the chapel over the years. While we can get a limited sense of these from publications through time, to bring things really to life it helps to ask people who were and are there.

Giving Chapel Evolves

Mrs. Hall noted that, unlike most buildings, the chapel has increased in importance over the years, rather than decreased. A central reason for this has been how giving chapels has evolved. What was once an anxiously anticipated (sometimes dreaded) obligation has been transformed into a virtual rite of passage for the students. Now the giving of chapels is central and primary for students, faculty, and administrators alike — for Concord Academy as a whole. Chapels are the collective heartbeat of the school.

What does this mean and what does it look and feel like? How could this be and how has the chapel evolved into this, the focal point of a student's entire time at Concord Academy? It may help to envision this by jumping right in, just as I did when I arrived at C.A. to start this study. Right away virtually everyone I spoke with said, "Have you been to a chapel?" or "You have to go to a chapel." So, of course I had to go. Now, before we do anything else together, let me take you with me to the first modern-day chapel I experienced.

Experiencing a Chapel Now

It's 8:10 A.M., a Tuesday morning, raining at Concord Academy. Outside some students are just arriving, hurrying along, dashing quickly inside to drop off their book bags, then out again. Others walk easily, faculty, students, administrators, chatting, catching up with a friend, huddling past in the rain. They are all headed straight past the main school, intent on the chapel — a morning pilgrimage of sorts.

Books, papers and last minute notes for today's test are now behind them. It's Jake's chapel today, Jake's day. Now, finally, as a senior, comes this moment Jake has thought about vividly for the past four years, ever since he sat, as a freshman, and listened to the seniors before him give their chapels. Yes, of course he is nervous, about to stand and speak before the entire school. But he is reassured, too. He has watched this for four years — seen what happens. He has nothing to fear.

He's standing around by the podium up front, checking his paper, positioning his glass of water, running his hand through his hair, stopping now and again to greet a friend. One person rushes up and gives him a big, long hug. Friends busily jockey their way to the front, finding a spot on the wall behind Jake, or the window, or the podium itself, where they tape their carefully prepared signs. Big, bright, colorful, and playful, on newsprint and poster board, they soon festoon the front, saying things like "Happy Chapel Jake-O" or "Chappy Hapel Bake Jartlett", or

Figure 4.6. A Chapel Sign for Jake.

There is a hum in the chapel as people chat and greet each other or squirm in beside each other on the benches, squeezing in. Everyone is nestled inside, warm and snug, and there is a cozy feeling, as if we were all holiday shoppers who are now heading home in a crowded bus or trolley, enjoying the jostling, the nudges, the being extra close and cozy. Music plays jauntily as people filter in. It is relaxed and jazzy, coming from big speakers Jake has positioned up front on the floor near the podium. His guitar is propped there, too.

After a while Jake stops chatting and greeting people and stands up at the podium, looking carefully out over everyone gathered there. He's smiling, looking first at one

person, then another, basking, it seems, in the moment and the warmth projected by people gathered there for him. And he sends back that warmth, that cozy, expectant feeling when people of good cheer and good will come together to share something special, and all their own.

Now the last signs are being hung and the last few people are wending their way to seats, or making room for each other. The last ones without seats are standing several rows deep in the back or up above in the sophomore balcony. Several spill out into the foyer. And then the music stops. Jake stands still, surveying the gathering, taking it in and giving back to it, all at once. In the next instant a total hush falls over the group. The air is thick with expectation, with attention, with supportiveness — more than that, with love. It's strong, palpable, unmistakable - something you feel as though you could reach out and touch.

Jake basks just a moment more, savoring the moment, the feeling. Now the chapel is totally silent, waiting. Then he begins, "I am Jake Bartlett, and this is my chapel." He tells about himself before he was even born — his family, their circumstances. Then he works his way up to when he was two years old, then three. He tells a little about being six. He recounts embarrassing moments, or funny ones, or revealing incidents. He moves easily through memory and time. His story is personal and endearing. To some it may feel even too intimate — the kind of thing you usually tell only your best friend.

There are moments when you think he is about to launch into a personal philosophy or lesson. But he steers clear and keeps to the quiet, small things. His life as he has known it, as he thinks of it now, looking back and forward. There are no grand pronouncements or presumptions. But there is a relaxed openness, a total lack of guile or pretense, a wonderful sense of trust. He intersperses his words with music, brief interludes, like accompaniment — little respites. At one point he comes out from behind the podium, moves to the center of the raised area in front of the chapel's big carving, arranges himself in a chair, with his guitar, and faltering here and there, unabashedly plays

a song and sings. A good deal of laughter precedes and accompanies his song, some of it nervous, it seems — some for gentle encouragement. None appears ill-willed or derisive.

Then Jake returns to the podium for a few final words. He thanks his family, his teachers, his friends. A final piece of taped music comes on. Jake looks out over the crowded chapel again, his gaze moving easily, resting here and then there. Then extending both his arms and raising his hands in an uplifting gesture, he welcomes the group to rise, signaling that, yes, his chapel is over.

No clapping, no hoots or cheers. People rise and either jostle their way out, or make their way up to congratulate Jake, faculty and friends alike joining the long line of well-wishers who are hugging him and clapping him on the back or shoulder. They throng around him, beaming, linger a moment or two, then slip out the side door by the podium, off to class. The entire time of Jake's chapel, from start to finish —fifteen minutes. It is the longest fifteen minutes in Concord Academy's day and the most prized.

Three times a week it is how the school chooses to begin. Most of these times are individual seniors "giving" their "Senior Chapels," as many as ninety in the course of a year. Far less frequent, but eagerly awaited and received is the occasional faculty chapel. And with a certain regular predictability, opening the year or the semester, and closing them, are chapels given by the Head or Associate Head of the school. Rarer still, an invited guest or visitor may give a chapel — once, maybe twice, a year. They are none of them the same, these chapels, yet all, with rare exceptions, happen in the same chapel.

Before leaving Jake and the 1990s, I want to share a picture with you (figure 4.7 on the next page). It shows Jake, standing at the podium, looking out toward the school gathered there in the chapel. Just now Jake turns toward the small cluster of friends sitting close, in the seats saved for the speaker's special friends. Standing at the podium, raised just a few steps up, he can easily see everyone and they can see him. This is a small detail, but not unimportant. As C.A. teacher Janet Eisendrath remarked,

And I think those few little steps up are very important. I think whether I talk to you and stand on a chair (chuckling), how long the aisle is, I think all of that makes a difference. But another thing is that I am just <u>amazed</u> at how many seniors will start, "When I was a freshman, I couldn't imagine doing this. I have thought since I was a sophomore over what I would say. . . . You know? And so that's, rite of passage . . . whatever you want to call it. I think it's also that you go up those steps to do it. And it's not that you look down on people, I don't think it's that. You're not looking <u>down.</u> It's that you, this is <u>you,</u> your moment.

Figure 4.7. Jake Basks a Moment Longer.

But it was a long way from the chapel's earliest days at Concord Academy to Jake's chapel in the spring of 1991. Let's retrace those steps.

The Early Years and Religious Trappings

In the earliest years of the chapel coming to Concord Academy, seniors were required to "give" a chapel, as were faculty. The administration also routinely "gave" chapels. As a student in those early days, I remember the faculty and administrator's chapels as stories, often personal folk–like parables with revealing lessons. I had the sense that this was where the adults in the community shared with us what they thought mattered, where values were articulated and where who we were, or could be, as a community was put into words. It offered us the human and sometimes personal side of our teachers and school heads in a way not otherwise easy to access.

Not only that, but in those days the chapel had significant religious trappings. There was clearly an altar at the front, replete with cross and candles. The Bible rested on a simple pulpit. Both the choir, the speaker, the organist, and any people with other official roles wore long maroon robes. There were hymnals throughout and a great deal of hymn singing by the entire congregation, along with prayers and Biblical readings. Mrs. Hall, the school's headmistress until 1963, held forth in the chapel on many occasions, always starting the gathering by intoning, "Lord grant that as we come to Thee through the crowded ways of life, we may be still and know that Thou art God." Tradition held that anyone else giving a chapel began that way as well. But in those days to give a chapel was to choose a reading or two, a few hymns, a prayer. Or perhaps the prayers were standard ones we knew. One person said it was always the Lord's Prayer.

By my time as a C.A. student, only five years into the chapel's use at C.A., you could choose a non-Biblical reading, if you wished, and many people did. Apparently a few years earlier the English Department (spurred on especially by English teacher Bill Eddy, an original chapel mover) had begun to do readings that, while still spiritual in nature, were not specifically Biblical. So poems, for example, began to be read, particularly those by esteemed authors Robert Frost, E. E. Cummings, or Archibald MacLeish, a favorite and friend of Mrs. Hall and the school. So some departure from the strict religious norm

began. There was not, however, the sense that students would hold forth at length on any subject, or with their own words, although this may have happened for a brief portion of what was still, essentially, a service.

Several alumnae I spoke with from that time remember "having" to give a chapel. Their tone of voice is ominous. Their memory is one of dread. They talk about having to somehow "get through it." Several specifically mention that they do not consider themselves public speakers: "It's not something I'm good at." A sense of the setting may be provided by the photographs on the following pages, showing a chapel in full "service" from that time period (Figures 4.8 & 4.9).

Even though the chapel had significant religious trappings and rituals in these early days at Concord Academy, it was not officially denominational or consecrated as a church. But its strong religious bent caused considerable concern. Mrs. Hall had reservations because Concord had no explicit religious connections. She was worried about possible objections to a chapel because of its implied religious affiliation. Several faculty mentioned their uneasiness in those first years, fearful that the school they had presumed to be secular was becoming religious. Later they found their fears lessened as the chapel had a gathering and community-building function and was more for sharing stories and allegories than for any religious dogma. One faculty member, who was Catholic, was terribly concerned that the building was not consecrated and would be inappropriate for her and for the few Catholic girls then at the school. She voiced loud objections, then, that the chapel was not religious enough, but to no avail.

Religion aside, clearly Mrs. Hall put great stock in seniors presenting to the school as a whole. For her an important part of growing up was getting up in front of your peers and teachers and speaking. It was, it seemed, presumed to build self-confidence. Some students relished it, while many cringed at the idea. Alumna Martha Taft's original 1965 chapel script, written about what the chapel meant to her — is a vivid example of chapels from that time, with personal text and precise prayers and hymns (See Appendix E).

Figure 4.8. Morning Chapel "Service", May, 1990

Figure 4.9. Early Chapel Service, with New Altar and Pulpit

While some students in those early days relished giving a chapel, others dreaded it and might take heart now in hearing that faculty, too, were often intimidated at the prospect of giving a chapel. Presumably faculty were expected to be not only composed and articulate but also witty, and, heaven forbid, somehow wise. When I asked people at C.A. about those earliest chapel times, everyone said, "Ask Sylvia Mendenhall." They had great confidence in her detailed and unfailing memory, her powers of observation, and her keen appreciation of irony. Having taught at the school since 1956, the year of the chapel's arrival, she also had an extensive first-hand view. Sitting with her in her classroom, Sylvia (Miss Mendenhall to me, who had been her student in English in this very same space thirty years earlier) launched readily into vivid descriptions of the chapel's early days, all the while with a twinkling eye and an occasional mischievous smirk or quiet chuckle.

> The faculty were supposed to do it, at first, in the early days, and they were absolutely terrified. The faculty were just as scared as the students. We had to wear robes, too, and they were always two inches too long for me. So I had the added peril of falling off the steps. I had to get up there and kind of arrange myself so I didn't trip over them. . . .
>
> Then, the first year, a girl had happen to her what everybody has always dreaded. At the time we didn't have a real podium. It was just a music stand on which a big, heavy Bible was resting. And she was looking for a psalm she was going to read and she couldn't find it. She leafed and leafed and leafed and she got more and more scared. And there she was holding onto the Bible and all of a sudden she passed out. She fainted and she and the stand and the Bible all went crashing down the steps, right in front of the seventh grade. The seventh grade had been told over and over again that what you did when anything bad happened was that you pulled in your toes and you sat there just as silently and rigidly as you could. So they all dutifully pulled in their toes while this body was there.
>
> In the meantime, Pete Morse and somebody else ran down from the balcony, because the faculty sat on top in the balcony. They ran down and went around to pick her up and revive her. But to my knowledge that's the only time anyone's ever fainted. But a lot of people have thought about it.

The Late '60s and '70s: Protest and Non-Chapels

So what happened? How did the chapel move from sometime dreaded obligation with extraordinary anxiety to singular cherished moment? From talking with people present

over the several intervening decades, I learned that the transition to today's rite of passage was gradual and along the way mirrored the general tenor of the times.

Religion Goes. There was the early, quasi-religious formulaic period, but toward the late 1960s the religious trappings were gradually given up. First went the robes, later followed by the hymns, and finally even the cross was quietly removed. This all happened apparently during the late '60s and early '70s, as people remember it. Martha Taft's time in 1965 was still steeped in religion, from vestments, to choir, to prayers and hymns. An alumna from the class of '69 told me that she shocked the faculty by being the only one in her class to read from the Bible. In contrast, in the chapel's first days, not to read from the Bible would have been considered a grave omission.

The cross was still up in the late '60s and an alumna from that time describes how during her era the cross was removed for the first time during a chapel, by a Jewish student — resistance, claiming your own identity, and claiming the right to have the symbols around you match that identity. Later the cross simply quietly disappeared. As one faculty member remarked, "It just was no longer who we were." As the school became increasingly diverse in religions and cultures, the Christian (and seemingly Episcopalian) trappings and rituals were simply no longer appropriate. So around the late '60s and early '70s religion fell away. Examination of yearbooks from that time reveal that chapel speakers still appear in robes as late as 1969, although no robes are pictured after that year.

Protest & Breaking Norms. Just as the late '60s and '70s saw student protest and increasing radicalism across the land, so, too, at Concord Academy and in the chapel. As Sylvia Mendenhall describes it,

> Then we got into the late sixties and particularly the seventies. Every day at school was Halloween. It was unbelievable. Some people wore weird hats and all kinds of costumes. And along with the coming of costumes came more radical approaches to what was allowable in chapel.

Chapels became more whimsical, more idiosyncratic, and less serious. Childhood favorite poems or stories were now the readings. Folk songs replaced hymns. Recorded music crept in. One student reported that she and her friend were severely chided for

playing taped music for the first time ever in the chapel. That was 1966 and the music was something discrete and classical — Haydn or Handel as she remembers it. Another student is still remembered by her classmates for officially "breaking the sound barrier" the very next year. In her chapel she played the tape of "Come On Baby Light My Fire." It was a full seven minutes of a content and form that many people clearly deemed inappropriate. At least one faculty member stormed out in protest.

After that, though, taped music was more and more the norm. By later in the '70s there was even an underground "Midnight Chapel Committee," apparently dedicated to chapel antics in the middle of the night, the most infamous of which was lining the chapel rafters with beer cans. Faculty describe the transition as creeping in during the late '60s and then leaping in the '70s. Not accidentally I am sure, this also coincided with the first boys to come to Concord Academy, as the school became coeducational in 1971. As faculty member Phil McFarland described it:

> In the seventies it [chapel] was just another institution, like all other institutions, that should be questioned and exposed for the foolishness it was. So there were instances when you began to think they were going to do <u>anything</u> up there . . . to make it different from what anybody else had done. If your primary motive is to break the formula, as in the seventies it was, then you start doing all kinds of absurd things. You're going to do everything to violate the sanctity of the place, in so far as any sanctity remains.

<u>Non-Chapels</u>. As a time of protest, the '70s were also the time that one faculty member described as "non-chapels." In keeping with the spirit of the times, some students disdained taking their chapels seriously at all. Some were entirely cavalier. Although the format had grown to include a personal statement, they would forgo that altogether and sometimes do nothing but play music for the entire time, seemingly from something they had hastily grabbed that very morning from their dresser, one faculty member remembers.

<u>The '80s: "Deeply Confessional</u>"

We should not be surprised that as in society at large the protest of the '70s gave way to the more self-absorption of the '80s, so too, what happened in chapels changed and

became what one faculty member describes as "deeply confessional." Several people mention this period as parallel with the Phil Donahue and Ophrah Winfrey television shows where people are asked to reveal their deepest secrets and innermost feelings. The feeling is that the more shocking, the better. There is also the sense during this time of sharing ways in which we see ourselves as victims, of unearthing and articulating how we have been victimized. Typical of intimate disclosures, each story revealed seems more shocking than the one before. There is a one-up-manship that easily settles in and is endemic to disclosures. One person discloses something, and the next person feels compelled, almost as a show of solidarity, or a confirmation of mutual trust, to reveal something equally, or even more, intimate and hidden. It is as if the person is saying, "I really value that you trusted me enough to reveal that to me, so now let me show you how much I trust you in return. I will reveal something even more intimate, to show I trust you even more." Faculty member Phil McFarland describes that era this way:

> There can be marvelous therapy in this. And it does express a great trust in the group, the community. But there was a time, I think we're not in that particular phase right now [1992], but it's not long ago, that each one seemed to be topping the one before and you came out just wrung out as you thought of what these students were going through . . . instances of abuse and abortion or rape and so on and so forth were all subject matter that were being addressed . . . and morning after morning.

Many students in the '80s reportedly opted out of giving chapel altogether. Some said they felt too "normal" and that not having had a traumatic childhood or pivotal crushing events in their lives, they hardly knew what to say. Others said they didn't have any special "seniority advice" to give, as was apparently the custom. Still others expressed feeling too much pressure and public scrutiny, too much a feeling of being judged. To give a chapel was to expose yourself and open yourself up to criticism.

Gradually, as we moved through the '80s and into the '90s, the continuous, escalating trauma sequence of chapels subsided. I spoke with Maria Lindberg, working on publications at the school during this study, and also a C. A. alumna ('81). Her brother was also a student, arriving in '73, just as co-education was getting underway, and her

sister was in the class of '79. She describes her own time and that of her siblings, saying about the chapel:

> I did not give one [a chapel], actually. . . . I didn't feel that I had tremendous advice to give everybody, which is more what students did then. . . . This is the kind of thing they used to say, "This is my philosophy of life." And I felt that for myself, that was presumptuous, because I didn't know what my philosophy of life was (laughs). . . . I didn't feel I had the lesson or the story to tell everybody else. Then aside from that, I thought, is there anything I really want the whole school to know about me or that I feel I <u>have</u> to tell the whole school? No, there isn't. So I thought I'll just enjoy watching everyone else's (laughs). And public speaking is not my forte. So . . . just for lots of reasons I decided not to give one. And it hasn't been something I've regretted incredibly. Both my brother and sister gave one . . . but they were not as grand a thing. Now it's very much more like a rite of passage . . . especially with the receiving line at the end (laughs).
>
> I ask: How and when did that happen (chapel gaining great import as a rite of passage)? I'm curious. I'd like to know.
>
> Maria: Well, that would be, you know, it wasn't in '81, but then when I came back in '86 it was — so somewhere in five years.

The '90s: The Chapel's Golden Age?

Now that we are into the 1990's, although chapels are still highly personal and often emotionally charged, there is less of an exposé quality about them. Phil McFarland suggests that perhaps the present is the "Golden Age of chapels." Chapels are now more thoughtful, carefully crafted, and wide-ranging. While there are still deep personal revelations, there is not such a strong compulsion to follow one confession with another.

Now one chapel might be a poetic allegory for a person's life, another a collection of anecdotes experienced in growing up, while a third might be a wonderfully articulate, witty, commentary on our times and coping with adolescence in the late twentieth century. Some are scathing criticisms of the school, but mostly with powerful desires to help make the school a better place. Often with these there is the sense of the need to be heard and to be taken seriously — not just about one's person, but also about issues that are treated in a chapel talk with passion and thoughtfulness. One hears students saying, not just, "Here's what's wrong," but also, "Here's what I think we can and should do about it." There is a willingness, indeed an eagerness, to go beyond diatribe to practical solutions.

Almost without exception students bring to their chapels now a seriousness of intent and an exceptional commitment. As one faculty member notes, "It's a moment that students look forward to with all their heart." Another one comments, ". . . for the vast majority, students start thinking about their chapels when they are freshmen." This was readily confirmed by students. One senior told me that a friend of hers said that "he thought that was when he became an adult, when he gave his chapel." Faculty member Kevin Jennings said, "I think it's the central ritual of the student's career at Concord Academy — the chapel."

Still, not every single person has a central or pivotal experience in giving a chapel. Some do still occasionally give what seem to be non-chapels. For example, the strategy of relying almost totally on music is occasionally employed even now, although one has the sense that now it is more of an avoidance tactic or a crutch than a protest. I happened to go to one such chapel. It was mostly music, interspersed with a few odds and ends, snippets of thank you's or other brief statements, tossed out to the chapel the way a person not really intending to feed the birds might reach in a pocket for whatever was handy and toss that out, scattering a few bits on the ground.

I was surprised by that chapel and mentioned it to one of the seniors I had come to know. She said essentially that chapels reflect the person giving them and where that person is in his or her life at that moment in time. Expressing disappointment, too, with that chapel she closed by saying, "Yeah, I mean, where's the chapel part?"

Music Changes. Besides the whole tenor and focus of chapels gradually shifting, music has made a particularly bold shift. Now, though not usually played continuously in a person's chapel, at least some taped music is expected. People would be surprised if it weren't played. During the time that I conducted this study, the school actually installed a permanent sound system in the chapel wall near the podium so that students could plug their tapes directly into it and not have to bring in their own sound systems. I imagine this would come as a surprise and shock to a lot of alumnae/i. Taped music would have been

unthinkable in the earliest days of the chapel. In fact, now the shift in music has come so far that singing a hymn in a chapel would be considered a drastic step, and indeed, would be completely shocking.

It is not just singing hymns that is gone today in the chapel, but singing period. When I asked one faculty member if they sing, or what they sing, in the chapel, he was surprised by the question, saying, "You're asking me questions that in a million years I would have never thought. Like, you asked me to describe what goes on here. I mean, given the fact that the school is very interested in music, I find it kind of strange that we don't. No, we do not sing [in the chapel]." Considering, he wondered why they do not have more singing in the chapel. I learned that the school chorus sometimes practices in the chapel and even occasionally performs there, but besides a student possibly opting to perform briefly during her chapel, singing during regular chapels is completely out and apparently has been for some time. It is so long gone people don't even think of it.

Religion Out — or Rare Departure. Religion is out, too. People talk of the chapel as sacred, but not religious. Several teachers remarked that many of the students are so far removed from religion that they don't even have any religious associations with things in the chapel that others automatically think of religiously, from altar to pulpit to Biblical verse. There is even a distinct aversion people express toward religion and anyone "imposing" it on others in the chapel.

In a seemingly self-consciously radical step, recently one student, Sharon Bergman, who was the head of the Jewish students association, prayed a Jewish prayer, in Hebrew, out loud, as part of her chapel. It was both the fact that the prayer was Jewish that made it a radical departure, and the fact that it was a prayer, period. The chapel has become almost fervently secular, as has the school as a whole, so that to incorporate any denominational song, prayer, reading, or ritual into a chapel presentation to the entire school risks being immediately accused of being political incorrect, of imposing one's religion on others.

And yet this student chose to share her prayer with the whole group. She had also conducted Jewish student services at special times in the chapel, and she presented her prayer as if it were a special offering to share an important and deeply meaningful part of herself with the school. At one level she was pushing the envelope and at another was saying this is a part of me and I want to share it with you. It was a surprising thing for her to do, and at the same time a carefully thought out strategic thing to do as well. It was a way of saying this is part of the diversity among us and I offer it as such, both as representative of my religion and of my person and I welcome you to accept it in the full, heartfelt spirit in which it is offered. There was also a sense in which, because religion is not actively practiced in these chapels now, she wanted to let it in. Pushing the envelope again. These are not things she said explicitly, but they are things I inferred from seeing her chapel on videotape and from talking with her and coming to know her.

So, in a kind of ironic twist, the introduction of religion in the chapel becomes an assertion against hegemony. But maybe I can say that because in this case the religion introduced was not the dominant one. Had her prayer been Christian and in English rather than Hebrew, so everyone would know what it was really saying, it might well have been interpreted as dominating and oppressive. Actually, I am not sure how others interpreted her Hebrew prayer, as I was not present at the time, nor has anyone mentioned it to me. I would suspect that in the interest of diversity alone, they would welcome it. But I am not sure.

Chapel Now Still a Protest Site. Even though we have passed the rebellious '60s and '70s, the chapel is still a site of protest, of contestation. This is a topic we will return to later. Suffice it to say at present that the presence and expression of conflict for adolescents is critical to their healthy development. In "the standard adolescent literature, conflict emerges as the key dynamic by which the 'necessary' tasks of separation take place" (Kaplan et al., 1991, p. 125). Protesting, going against the grain, breaking the rules, pushing the limits, and thereby changing the rules, hoping to change them, or

simply asserting one's power to ignore them are typically adolescent. Furthermore, psychologists argue that these are key to adolescent separation, individuation, and autonomy, which in turn are central to adolescent development and maturation toward adulthood (or so they are in the habit of saying). We might want to keep in mind that recent work on the psychology of women shows this framework for growth and development to have a particular male bias and derivation. Women, some developmental and feminist psychologists contend, mature through developing relationships and increasing connections with people, rather than through disconnecting (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Jordan et al. 1991; Miller, 1976).

Nevertheless, whether seen as connecting to peers or disconnecting from parents and authority, rebellion and non-conformity are typically adolescent. I hate saying it that way though. To say "typically adolescent" sounds as though I am dismissing it. It is like saying, "Oh, that's a stage they're going through," like the infamous 'terrible twos' of toddlers. At any rate, dissent is natural in young people, partly as a strategy to distinguish themselves from the norms around them, partly because everything is up for grabs in searching for one's own authenticity and identity, partly out of genuine disagreement and differences in values and perspective. The impulse to dissent can be powerful and transformative, for individuals, whole generations, communities, and even entire societies.

So we should not be surprised to see rebellion and non-conformity appear in the chapel as it does elsewhere. We might even come to expect it more in the chapel than elsewhere, especially as the chapel increasingly becomes the site of highest personal individual and community identity at the school. It is the place where testing the limits has the most impact and shows up the most. And at the same time as the chapel is the place most heavily identified with the community as a whole, it is also the place that most welcomes people to be themselves. It gives them permission. We will return to this topic in more depth later, especially in Chapter 9 where empowerment is explicitly explored. At

the moment we might simply consider that the chapel as a site for protest and resistance is not merely incidental.

Intimacy and Disclosure

Since even today intimacy and disclosure play such a vital role in the chapel, it will behoove us to explore them more closely. Some psychologists offer insights especially applicable to the "deeply confessional" chapel period and to the ongoing intimate, revealing nature of both individual chapels and the chapel experience as a whole.

Disclosure Reciprocity

People feeling a need to respond to each other's revelations by unveiling equally private, or equally shocking secrets is referred to as "disclosure reciprocity." It is described as "the increased likelihood that recipients of self-disclosure input will respond by disclosing about themselves at a comparable level of intimacy" (Derlega & Berg, 1987, p. 4 - 5). Several possible explanations are offered to explain this occurrence (Derlega & Berg, 1987, p. 5). One is that to disclose demonstrates that the discloser likes and trusts the other person, and so the other person discloses in turn, to show that these same feelings are returned. Another is likened to equity theory in exchanges. If one person reveals something at a certain level of intimacy, the receiver is almost obliged to share, or owes, the first person an equally intimate revelation. The third explanation offered is that reciprocity occurs because the next person is simply mimicking what they have first seen modeled. The assumption here is that whatever is modeled is presumed to be the appropriate level of intimacy or revelation.

But at the same time there is a sort of shock threshold that is reached as each intimacy is revealed. One person reveals that he took money from his mother's wallet as a child, and the next person feels that the same revelation would no longer seem as significant.

The second person, then, is in some unspoken way encouraged to reveal something slightly more heinous — like shoplifting. The third person, then, might feel obliged to reveal a full scale robbery, and so on. In chapel revelations, this escalation can lead to people actively dredging up the most horrific thing they can possibly find in their background or experience. Some may even feel disappointed or unworthy if their experience hasn't been traumatic enough to match other people's trials. How this inherently glorifies trauma and extols victimization is, in my view, disturbing and problematic. It seems to me to be a double-edged sword. The positive side is the contribution of disclosure to intimacy and development, but the negative is the danger of eulogizing victimization and not moving beyond it.

Disclosure's Role in Development

On the one hand psychologists can maintain that disclosures of this sort are vital to self-development. Psychologists' "social penetration theory" (Altman & Taylor, 1973) posits that disclosures are pivotal in developing closeness and intimacy. They claim further that not having the opportunity to disclose, or not taking the opportunity when it is presented, prevents people from getting close to each other and therefore results in loneliness. The counseling and psychotherapy fields rely heavily on client disclosure and presume its relevance to self-discovery and understanding (Derlega & Berg, 1987, p. 5). The intimacy involved and engendered through disclosures is described as follows:

> An intimate relationship is "a relational process in which we come to know the innermost, subjective aspects of another, and are known in a like manner.". . . Intimacy is a transactional process; that is, the process of sharing is 'valued' as much as what is shared . . . Through the process of sharing, interactents believe that they develop a sense of mutuality or oneness that is unique to their relationship and experience a greater degree of self-differentiation and clarification of their personal identities as individuals. (Chelune in Derlega & Berg, 1987, p. 10-12)

Furthermore, loneliness and depression are thought to result from a lack of intimacy and a paucity of disclosure opportunities. Sermat (1980, p. 306) said that most people describe their own loneliness as directly related to "problems in personal, intimate

communication with others." What it takes to disclose personal "secrets," if you will, are qualities held up in humanistic psychology as vital to human growth and development. As Carpenter notes (1987, p. 214):

> Humanistic and existential theorists (e.g., Maslow, 1968; Mowrer, 1964; Rogers, 1961) have also frequently focused on concepts related to self-disclosure, such as genuineness, openness, and honesty. Such relational patterns are viewed as important for achieving self-knowledge, fulfillment, and belongingness.

The cathartic effect of self-disclosure is also assumed to have positive mental health benefits. Just getting things off your chest and actually communicating them to someone else, especially when you perceive yourself as a victim, seems to help people cope with the trauma (Silver & Wortman, 1980, cited in Coates & Winston, 1987, p. 232).

Participants Echo Psychologists

These points were mentioned by numerous people whom I interviewed about the chapel. Modeling is, of course, especially pronounced, as students hear each other's chapels for years before they have to give their own and everyone hears almost every chapel given while they are there. The feeling of intimacy as a school and of personal and interpersonal connectedness is also high and is mentioned as in good measure coming from the level of intimacy and personal revelation offered through people's chapels. Also mentioned repeatedly was that the high level of disclosure in the chapel confirms the incredible trust that people must feel in Concord Academy as a community. And "disclosure reciprocity" does seem to be heavily at play — whether from a sense of obligation to match a gift of intimacy already offered, from following the model given, or from a desire to demonstrate reciprocal trust in the community.

Modeling Risk and Acceptance

There is also power in seeing someone else take the risks associated with self-disclosure, and be rewarded for it — rewarded with warmth, supportiveness, and respect

from the community, as is so often reported to be the case with revealing chapels. Seeing that happen and being part of that experience, even as an observer/ participant, can be a powerful way of realizing "permission," of thinking and feeling that it might be all right to take such risks oneself. There is confirmation that the setting is safe and that repercussions from disclosure are likely to be positive rather than negative.

Furthermore, typical of a search for connectedness and intimacy and typical of adolescence is the way in which self-disclosure is to some extent a test of acceptance or rejection. If I disclose something dire and dread, will I still be welcome in the community, or will I so alienate people that I am rejected? Will I be accepted, not just for who I appear to be, but who I "really" am, secrets and all?

Faculty member, Clare Nunes, looked visibly pained as she said:

> We've had a couple of <u>harrowing</u> descriptions of families plagued with alcoholism. We've had a couple of confessions of having been sexually molested. This year we had a student who said that her brother had sexually molested her. It was a family in which a divorce had occured. Her father was there — present — for the chapel. And the <u>whole</u> chapel . . . or the last half of the chapel, I'd say, was dedicated to this (hushed) topic. It was pretty painful. A lot of us didn't know . . . I don't think any of us knew he was there at the time. But <u>we</u> were . . . students were certainly devastated.

When I spoke with longtime faculty member Bill Bailey, he was visibly moved as he remembered certain especially intimate and revealing chapels. Retelling these tales and remembering the tellers, his eyebrows rose, his brow furrowed with care and concern, his voice softened to a whisper.

> Some of them get teary. Uh, (hushed) one boy talked about his grandmother and wept. And it was so moving that many of us found ourselves in tears. Because his grandmother had died of cancer and he'd had this wonderful relationship with her and he talked about it. (normal tone returns) It was just amazing. So tragedy is revealed — real tragedy with children who have suffered enormously.

Remembering other heartrending chapel tales too raw to offer here in the cold distance of disembodied print, Bill's voice was gentle and careful, his expressions pained, his gestures reaching out. I offer his picture on the following page (figure 4.10) in hopes of helping you imagine him and his heartfelt ways, enlivened with care, passion, and visible empathy.

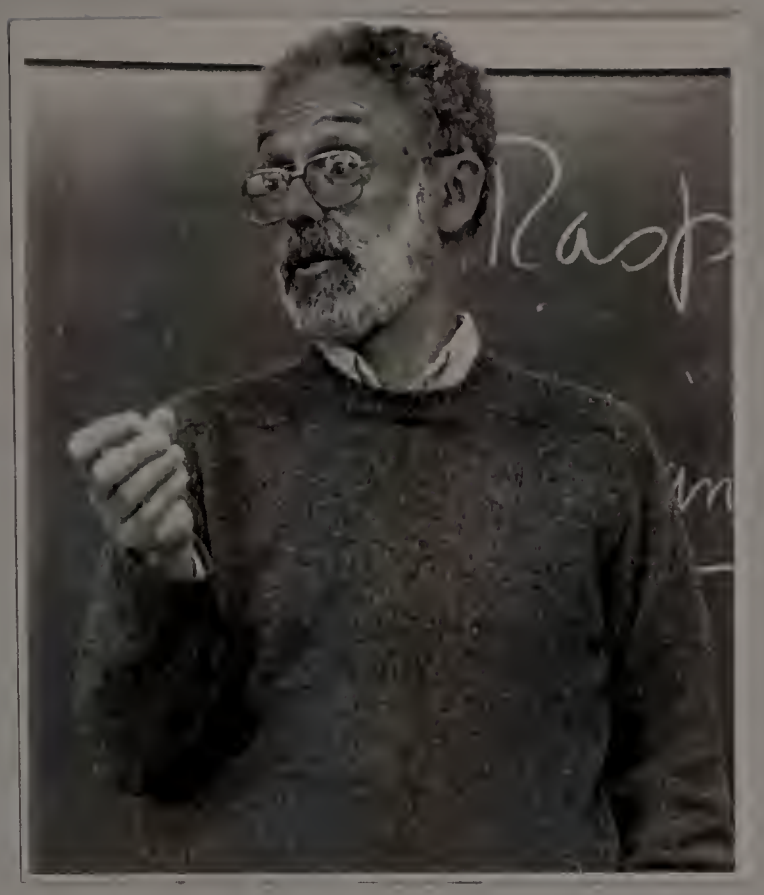


Figure 4.10. Bill Bailey, C.A. History Teacher

Time and again people told me stories of tenderness, pain, and collective angst that they had experienced through particular chapels and through the cumulative effect of chapels with such high levels of personal import and revelation. Clearly chapels offer an opportunity for people to reveal themselves and for others to feel much closer and more intimate with them and with each other as a community, in some sense through the power of common witness, of fully "attending" to another person in need, collectively and caringly.

A Special Case of Community Intimacy

As we might expect, the literature on self-disclosure is principally about intimate disclosure between two people, in a setting of friends, family, or lovers. The chapel demonstrates the intriguing case of high levels of self-disclosure in a large group setting — one person disclosing things to a group of three hundred or more. This aspect of the chapel was frequently mentioned, especially by the adults in the community. They

expressed astonishment that students and sometimes faculty were able to do this, revealing, as many mentioned, to three hundred people what they might never share with one or two.

I suspect that the large group setting and quasi-public nature of these disclosures may strongly influence their characteristics. For one thing, in chapels, rather than a balanced reciprocity, where one person discloses at roughly the same level of intimacy as the other, there is often an escalating level of intimacy and disclosure. It is almost as if, because so many chapels are experienced in succession, a saturation level is easily reached. What was shocking at first loses its ability to impress people after multiple similar examples and exposure. So repeated disclosures up the ante, just as they might between intimate friends. To achieve the same attention now takes an even more striking revelation. Hence what may have begun as endearing and heartwarming closeness and warm personal sharing can easily escalate to heartrending revelations.

Furthermore, in a setting like the chapel, the audience is not self-selected. Disclosures and intimacy between dear friends presumably happen by mutual consent. And among close personal friends, disclosures and levels of intimacy are thought to match their comfort levels to some extent. We imagine that friends or intimate family members reach levels of intimacy with which they are comfortable and that various social tactics are available to them to avoid levels of discomfort, such as withdrawing from the conversation, voicing disapproval, or showing visible distress.

In the more semi-public setting of the chapel, however, those revealing intimacies through their chapels do not have to take such immediate responsibility for the feelings of and effects on their listeners. Indeed, ongoing dialogue and interpersonal interaction between the chapel "giver" and others is not expected, and is considered even inappropriate in most cases. Several people remarked that, to them, giving their chapels and revealing special, hitherto hidden things about themselves were important and rewarding, in and of themselves. The chapel offered people the opportunity to unburden themselves. To them the unburdening itself was the point and for others to think that this then opened the door

for dialogue seemed presumptuous and inappropriate. One day I was talking with two seniors about how people would rather not have to talk one-on-one with people about what they revealed in their chapels, when one student, Aden Kumler, commented

> I mean, you sort of feel like, Gosh, can't this be an understanding? Like, can't we have an understanding without discussing it? (all laugh) Because if you discuss it, then all of a sudden you've gotta dredge up all this stuff which . . . it took so much energy to get out at chapel, that you have no energy to discuss it after.

So there is the sense that the chapel offers strength in numbers. One can feel free, apparently, to divulge intimate secrets under the cloak of untouchability or invulnerability offered by the chapel. Presenting to the whole school, paradoxically, seems to offer speakers some protection from more loaded and less highly controlled interpersonal interactions. The chapel speaker speaks and others listen. And the speaker presumably says just what he or she wants — no more and no less. The degree of personal control and individual license is high. There is the sense that listeners can take it or leave it. The gift shared — and it is seen largely as a gift — consists of that one fifteen minute experience and ends with that. So it seems invasive for people to come up later to discuss one's chapel or to ask more about things personally revealed.

At the same time as the setting and experience seem cathartic for many people, successive heartrending revelations can come to weigh heavily on the listening, receiving community. In more typical cases in the world at large where personal disclosures are intimate one-on-one exchanges, one person's revelation is balanced by another's and people are listened to and listener in turn, so there can be a certain emotional balance attained. In the chapel this happens to some extent in that a listener one day may become the speaker another day. But the fact is that the vast majority of time people are listeners, not speakers. Indeed, most people speak for only one fifteen minute segment in their entire career at Concord Academy. Even longtime faculty may speak only occasionally. One faculty member I spoke with had been there twenty-seven years, and had spoken only three times. An administrator I spoke with had been there since 1979 and had never given

a chapel. And among this vast majority who listen, certainly some, maybe even most, are not entirely comfortable with intimate revelations themselves. Several faculty expressed that they would never consider giving revelations themselves on the order of those offered by the students.

Several people also said that listening to stories of extraordinarily trying experiences, chapel after chapel, takes its toll. I mentioned earlier that Phil McFarland talked of feeling "wrung out" after hearing one traumatic story after another. He went on to say, "And uh, that was making me a little, I think making me a little, I think making a number of us a little uncomfortable." Maria Lindberg, a C.A. staff person by 1986, described her reaction to how the chapels had become so confessional since her days as a student (C.A. '81). As she describes it:

> . . . what you're hearing in those chapels . . . for a lot of kids, how I lost my father, mother, family, when my parents divorced . . . A lot of kids, in the two years that I was working there, seemed to tell very sad stories. The second class of seniors that I saw, this would be the class of '88, had some genuinely tragic stories. You know, you almost dreaded chapel that year, because you thought, please let this chapel have two healthy parents who are married.

Others speak of hearing traumatic chapels as "painful." Faculty member Ron Richardson recounts that chapels can be "harrowing at times, because students have talked about rape, abortion, pregnancy . . . a family in such disarray that it's painful to listen to." Later he described how he would not think of walking out of a chapel. He said, "I don't care how — I do care, but — however painful (spoken with special vehemence) what it is you're saying is going to be, I'll stand through it." So, at the same time as heartrending, personal confessions spawn each other, their cumulative effect on the community can be both heartwarming and, in some cases, almost numbing.

Dangers of Eulogizing Victims. Another slightly more disturbing aspect of these deep confessions is the way in which they tend to glorify victims. When traumatic stories of victimization become the norm, people are encouraged to search for ways in which they have been victimized, as if their level of victimization represents their level of worth. They search for solidarity through victimization. It is kind of a mutual "see how

much pain and suffering we've all endured and all share" society. Sharing one's experience as a victim can elicit great empathy or sympathy, to be sure, but to measure one's worth in terms of how much trauma and trouble one has experienced is, I think, dangerous. To see oneself primarily as a victim is to give up one's power. Or to stay with the image of oneself as a victim and not to move beyond it, is to remain impotent. Maybe one underlying hope or presumption is that a first step to moving out of being a victim is to articulate how one has been victimized. Certainly a good deal of psychology and therapy seem based on that premise. But to eulogize victimization offers no healthy renewal or remedy.

Paulo Freire, a major spokesperson for empowerment and against oppression, talks about the danger of oppressed people staying trapped at the level of victimization. He acknowledges the seemingly mutually supportive, but actually disempowering, function of oppressed people getting together regularly and complaining about their oppressions. Venting and hearing about each other's harrowing experiences do create bonds among people. And the bonds alone can help people feel better. But it is like applying salve to wounds that are reinflicted every day. People meet and exchange how heavily victimized they are and find some solace and camaraderie in that sharing. But the good feelings of sharing and of solidarity can act to assuage their anger and defuse their power to act. So, yes, they might feel somewhat better, but does their situation and the cause of their trouble actually improve? In fact, by assuaging their feelings of being overburdened, they can actually lose the impetus to act. Maya Angelou addresses this dilemma as well. She writes, "Whining is not only graceless, but can be dangerous. It can alert a brute that a victim is in the neighborhood" (1993, p. 87).

This is not to say that telling and sharing one's own story are not powerful and critical ingredients in self-realization, identity, and building a sense of belonging and community. The problem, as I see it, is when people are stuck on a broken record of how traumatized they have been. In saying this, I do not wish to belittle anyone's experience.

But I do wish to acknowledge the importance of getting beyond seeing oneself as a victim. To the extent that one continues to portray oneself and conceive of oneself as a victim, one continues to let the oppressor or oppression define one. That is very different from claiming one's own power. I think of Simone Weil, who wrote, "Pain and suffering are a kind of false currency passed from hand to hand until they reach someone who receives them but does not pass them on" (in Gilden & Friedman, 1994, p. 62). Also quoted in Gilden and Friedman (p. 58), Jan Mitchell writes, "So many people to rescue, so little time."

From all reports and from my own experience, chapels in the 1990s have emerged as more balanced and perhaps more optimistic than during the heavily traumatized '80s. Nevertheless, chapels are still highly charged. They are not the place for idle chatter. People often share there what matters most to them and has touched them most deeply. Sadly, it sometimes takes tragedy and loss to throw our own lives into sudden and stark perspective, shaking us awake to who we are and what really does matter the most to us. So we should not be surprised to find some people's chapels focusing on their most heartfelt losses.

As a whole the chapel setting with its powerful precedents and people's high expectations challenges people to search for and reveal in themselves what Frank Lloyd Wright called "the essence brooding just behind aspect," to come to grips with who they "really" are. Grappling with this in a setting of community is a powerful tool for growth of individuals and the community as a whole. As Martin Buber (1966, p.71) noted:

> The inmost growth of the self is not accomplished, as people like to suppose today, in man's [sic] relation to himself, but in the relation between the one and the other, between men. . . in the mutuality of the making present — in the making present of another self and the knowledge that one is made present in his own self by the other — together with the mutuality of acceptance, of affirmation, and confirmation.

As faculty member Kevin Jennings remarked, ". . .what the chapel does for a lot of kids is they test out whether or not they're going to be accepted for who they are." In addition, by going beyond individual dyads to intimately engage the entire school, the chapel offers this

opportunity for self-definition, identity, and mutual affirmation and acceptance to the community as a whole. The chapel becomes an ongoing crucible for creating community.

The Focus Shifts: Perspectives of the Late '50s and '60s

From Giving a Chapel to Building & Mrs. Hall

How much the chapel and giving a chapel has gained in importance over the years is evident from talking about the chapel with people from the fifties and sixties, right down to those there today. When I talked to people presently at C.A., from students, to faculty, to administrators, without exception the first thing they told me about was the experience of people's (and particularly students') chapels. It was also routinely the focus of what they had to say. Only later would they mention the physical building, and usually later still the importance of the chapel having been found, moved, and reconstructed by people at the school.

This was not at all the case with alumnae from the chapel's early days at C.A., who mention the physical building and their association of the chapel with Mrs. Hall and what she stood for. The building having been taken down and put back up is much more prominent for them than for recent or present-day students, and for many, if they did mention giving a chapel, it was usually only after my inquiry about it. Not only that, but they would usually move on from the topic of giving a chapel with all due haste, apparently neither fond of it, nor giving it much due. Although perspectives on giving chapel in those days vary from delight to dread.

Varied Responses to Giving A Chapel

Chapel As Suffered Obligation. In one example, when I asked alumna M. A. (Rowland) Swedlund, C. A. '63, if she thought that kids giving chapels mattered much, she replied, "I have to look on that with extremely jaundiced eyes, since I . . . didn't learn

until much later to get up in front of people and talk. So I didn't find it a pleasant experience."

When I asked, "And you didn't, like when you were sitting in the chapel and other people were . . . "

She broke in, "Oh, I liked other people doing it. Oh yuh. Oh yuh. That was great! (laughs) I liked it a lot!" Spoken with a certain mischievous glee and devilish relish, there was the clear message that seeing other people as uncomfortable as she was seemed almost a treat and a lot more fun than suffering through giving her own chapel.

Chapel as Opportunity. Not everyone I met with felt this antipathy toward giving a chapel, however. Some remembered it with pleasure and warmth, and from those whom I interviewed, I got the impression that giving chapels had gained in prominence and personal import by as early as the mid-1960s. This was reinforced for me by receiving a letter recently from a graduate from the class of 1965, Martha Taft, who not only remembers her own talk, but treasures it. Having saved her own chapel talk carefully since 1965, she still takes it out and rereads it occasionally. The text is wonderfully descriptive of a host of ways in which she cherished the chapel, as the talk focused on the chapel and what it meant to her. I include a few excerpts here. The full text is available in the Appendix. Martha and her friend cleaned the chapel as part of their regular Chapel Committee duties. Part of Martha's chapel goes like this:

> After cleaning the chapel, both of us would usually sit for a while, on the altar steps, or wherever we happened to be, sometimes talking, sometimes just thinking about what the chapel meant to us: It meant one Spring spent building the steeple, or a day spent raising the bell. It meant the letter hanging in the back written by Fra Giovanni to a friend. It meant Mrs. Hall's speeches in Vespers or morning chapel. It meant lighting the candles, or passing the plate, sitting upstairs alone, or downstairs with friends. It meant friendship, with both silence and communication.
>
> To us, both together and alone, the chapel meant many things. To you, both as an individual and as part of the school, it can mean just as much. You have only to remember that the chapel is yours.

Here, from the mid-sixties, is an expression of warmth and care for the chapel that could well have been written yesterday, although modern times would not include either

such pervasive presence of the school's head in the chapel through "speeches" or such physical involvement with the building by lighting candles, cleaning, building, or "a day spent raising the bell." Martha still cherishes her talk and honors what the opportunity to give a chapel means for the whole school — testifying to the abiding import that giving a chapel holds for some from even the chapel's early days at C.A.

Others Oblivious. Yet others felt different. One alumna I spoke with had a hard time remembering that students even gave chapels. One good friend of mine from my own class of '63 was the very first person I spoke with when I was thinking of doing this project. I started by saying, "Do you ever think much about the chapel."

She replied, "Nope."

"Well, what about giving a chapel, do you ever think about that?", I asked.

She responded, "Did we give chapels?"

A less persistent person than me might have abandoned this project altogether after that brief but telling interchange. I shook my head and carried on, hoping that this was an aberration. That I barely remember this encounter now, after four years of exploring what the chapel means to people, demonstrates to me how readily I give weight to evidence I am hoping to find and how easily I gloss over examples to the contrary. I will say, however, that this was the only time I encountered this response. Recently when I reminded this friend of that conversation, she said, "Oh, I didn't say that!"

A Skeptical Response. Besides remembering their own chapels with either a certain amount of distaste or with special nostalgia, several alumnae found it surprising that giving chapels had come to mean so much to students and to the school as a whole now. Some were openly incredulous. In one case when I was talking with the one alumna who had the most active role in bringing the chapel to Concord and was an active carver as well, she was surprisingly reluctant to believe that the chapel could have gained such importance. When I said to her, "It's clear in talking with people that chapel means a

lot to them," she replied, "It seems to, or else they're all saying it does. I mean, I'm always a little bit . . . skeptical. I mean, how can it mean so much?"

I found that the early aumnae with the clearest sense of how important the chapel had become were those who had maintained close association with the school over the years, especially by having their own child or relatives attend, by coming back much later to work or teach at the school, or by serving actively on C.A. committees or boards.

Alumnae/i Attachment to Continuity & Meaning

Despite the varied responses that I encountered among alumnae, several people at Concord now mentioned how important the chapel is to alumnae/i. Both longtime faculty members and some administrators said that on return visits alumnae/i are always sure to visit the chapel and to remark on how important it is to them. One reason repeatedly offered to explain this was that the chapel is the one building on the campus that doesn't change, so maybe it is the one place at the school where alumnae/i feel at home. Elsewhere on the campus, dramatic changes greet one at every turn, from old buildings revamped and no longer fully recognizable, to entirely new buildings that have been added. As Admissions Director Mary Murray Coleman noted about the chapel, "It never changes. It smells the same, creaks the same. The light filters in . . . at times of day in the same way. Though things change outside, it stays. Hmmm."

There was also the explanation that the chapel grew in importance in people's minds sometimes years after they had left Concord as they gradually came to realize the import of having given a chapel. As Admissions Director Mary Murray Coleman commented:

> Kids are kids, and the most perceptive of them, I think, understand, particularly as they get to be seniors, the power that is involved . . . as they stand up there. But I believe it isn't til long after they've left here that they really do understand what it represents. And I've heard students talk about that. They want to come back to it. They're drawn to its . . . quietness. They remember that.

Focus on Building, Carving, & Mrs. Hall

What of other alumnae from these earlier days? If many do not consider the chapel so central or the giving of chapels as of great import, yet the chapel still holds meaning for them, what do they say about it? Some hold the chapel dear because they were involved directly with or associate the chapel with stories about the move, the carving, the reconstruction or associate the chapel with Mrs. Hall and her storytelling.

Almost all the alumnae I spoke with from that time mention Mrs. Hall and their pride and delight in the story of how the chapel was found abandoned and brought down. One particular alumna, Katy Rea Schmitt, who has since become a Concord parent and now teaches at the school, remembers that those taking the chapel down were not professional builders and she especially delights in the fact that they did it without permission. As she recounts:

> People who weren't professional is what really impressed me . . . and without permission. My understanding is that Mrs. Hall did this because she saw it. She saw an opportunity. She wanted it. She had all the pieces here delivered to campus before the trustees knew a thing about it. I like that part . . . the fact that she took the initiative, saw it, went ahead and did it, and worried about the trustees later.

She tells me this with an extra sparkle in her eye, a delighted expression, and a playful grin. The whole thing seems to energize her in an elfish, mischievous way. There is no hush of awe, no adulation from a distance, but a kind of practical, homey, "Hey, we could do this, too" enthusiasm.

Mrs. Hall's Perspective: Just Do It

Mrs. Hall delighted in the direct action approach. When I asked her about the chapel, she said, "Oh, you mean the do it thing." Her own account of the chapel history mentions time and again how others tried to dissuade her from the project. One was, she writes:

> . . . an academy friend who might, I thought, be sufficiently interested to give the necessary money. He discounted entirely, of course, the idea of our moving the

> building ourselves. I was soon to learn that I could never make anyone take me seriously when I suggested such a thing . . .
>
> Those interested in financing the cost of removal and reconstruction had been frightened away by more "expert advice" which prophesied a dubious result at great expense. Others who had taken the trouble to see for themselves had expressed the kindly opinion "you must be out of your mind." Finally, it seemed better to say nothing to anyone, there being evidence that there might be some loss of confidence in my judgment if I persisted. (Hall, 1962, p. 5)

When she talked about the chapel, calling it the "just do it" thing, she recalled her days as a child, remembering her first bicycle and taking it apart to fix it, or fixing broken dolls for all the other kids in the neighborhood. "How do you know how a thing is made unless you take it apart?" she queried. Her mother, she recalls, said about her problems with her second-hand bicycle, "Well, dear, it's your bicycle. Fix it." As Mrs. Hall said to me,

> That was the way I was brought up. It doesn't work, don't come to me with that. Fix it. So I took that bicycle apart. And I did it properly. I didn't spread the parts all over the rug somewhere. Father said, "Now dear, if you're going to do that in here, you're going to get an old shower curtain, or sheet, or paper. Mother said a shower curtain or sheet, because paper she said — she was very practical — paper will tear. And then I take this thing apart and of course it was all greasy. But I learned how things were made. And I did, therefore, at a very early age — I learned not to be afraid of something I owned but didn't know how to fix.

This practical, jump in and do it approach was so ingrained in her from childhood, that in response to me asking how she felt about the actual experience of taking the chapel down and putting it back up, how she felt as a woman, or whether she felt any sense of empowerment, she responded:

> I don't think I felt much about it, because I'd been doing things like that so frequently in my life. . . . My mother had taught me not to hang back. She taught me, "When you want something, dear, if it's all right to do, <u>do it.</u> Don't go around asking somebody to help you, or may I, or whatever."

<u>Carvers and Builders Speak</u>

Several of those I spoke with about their actual physical involvement with the chapel had a similar, casual, matter of fact response. They were not overly impressed with themselves for having worked on the chapel and it was not unusual for them to downplay

their own involvement and their own talent altogether. Some openly claimed to have no talent whatsoever and attributed their role to mere luck.

Two Sisters: A Carver & Painter. I spoke with two sisters, Marty and Mary Poole from the classes of '58 and '59, the chapel's earliest time at Concord. Marty's daughter Ann and son Donnie were C.A. classes of '86 and '92 respectively. Back at C.A. for Donnie's graduation, the Poole sisters met me in the chapel to talk about their experiences and impressions of the chapel. Marty said, "This place to me is incredibly special, unbelievably special, cause we, Mary and I, were both here when the thing was built. . . . I used to sing in this place, in the choir." She mentions it was fun, even though she imagines her own singing was probably off key. She says this playfully, in a good-natured way. We all laugh together about it. She continues, "Anybody can sing in chorus. It doesn't really matter." She remembers painting the chapel clapboards as a student and the fun conspiratorial, getting-out-of-class feeling.

> The other thing I remember about it — I didn't do any carving — but I painted the clapboards. I remember . . . we had two days, I think, when we were allowed to paint clapboards. And it was a sunny, spring day, when you'd never want to be in class and you always had to be in class. And she [Mrs. Hall] came in, the way she did every now and then, and just said, "Kids, you're free for the day! Come on out. We're gonna do some painting." And we sat on that walk out there and painted all day long in the sun. . . . But to be able to do that, I think, was marvelous.

Her sister, Mary, she remembers, carved the O's for the great Corinthians 13 carving up front. I ask Mary if she thinks of her own role, if seeing the carving now, sitting as we are in the chapel, brings to mind how much she had to do with it. Her reply surprises me in a way. She says:

> Um . . . yes, I think of it every now and then. Well, I think of it particularly when I come here. Although it's funny, when I walk into the chapel, I don't really think what I did. I just think what, you know, the chapel means.
>
> Her sister interjects: Well the feeling. . . Right. Especially Mrs. Hall. It brings back lots of things about Mrs. Hall and the kind of woman that she was to go out and find this thing, and take it . . . and cajole people into giving up their summer vacation and taking the thing apart piece by piece and bringing it back.

Belinda Burley: A Legend. Belinda Burley was the most directly involved of any student, having helped take the building down, truck it to Concord, and reassemble it, in addition to having carved significantly later. When I asked her what she thought about the chapel and her role in it, she replied:

> I guess I'm not much help to you, because I don't think of it a lot. And I don't think of my role in it . . . interesting . . . at all. I was married there, but I did not feel, you know, during my wedding, as though, Gee, I built this place, or anything like that. It was fun for me to do. But I feel as though everybody has built it up more since than it was at the time.

In my own time as a student at Concord Academy, Belinda Burley had acquired almost legendary status. We thought of her as the Paul Bunyan of the chapel, the one student the most directly involved with the whole exciting summer adventure. And yet Belinda thinks of her own role as entirely modest, saying,

> I suppose, when you stop to look at it, it was unusual. But Doreen Young, who worked on it, had already done this to her own house. So, you know, it was something that could be done, clearly. I didn't have to consider any of the difficult questions myself. I was just scurrying around, marking things . . . essentially doing the dog work. And it was fun. Someone was always telling me what to do and it made sense, so I did it. And the carpenter was there to keep us in line and say, you do this before you do that. You know, you lay the floor before you put up the walls and things. . . . As far as I know, they didn't have any advice pulling the thing apart. . . . I spent a lot of time just tearing things apart that were getting thrown away, shingles and lath and stuff like that . . . (pause) whatever needed doing. I did a lot of hammering and un-hammering.

She clearly considered her entire role rather uneventful and pedestrian. When I mention her virtual legendary status in my time, she says, "Yuh, well, that's what I mean by legends," as if there couldn't possibly be any substance to them.

Later in the conversation she allowed that buildings do now seem to her perfectly understandable and doable, so maybe in that sense the project empowered her to some extent.

> Building a building, I mean, there's really not much to it, if you know the stages to go through. And, for a long time I suppose in a sense it did empower me. I thought, Gee, I could build a building if I wanted to. Now, I never did. And gradually that sort of knowledge and understanding faded and got pushed further back in my brain. So now I wouldn't dare again. . . . Although I think . . . I truly think that any job, if you take it, break it down into pieces, is doable.

Later she explained that when she had an addition built onto her house, she had three children who were under ten years old. She tried to bring them out at each stage of the building so they would understand it. She even planned to make a little book about it, but never did. But, she noted, "It showed them that, really, it's just doing one thing and then doing another. And if you do each step carefully, so that things fit, then you don't have a problem later on, when you're trying to put the last board on."

So was her experience taking the chapel down and rebuilding it empowering for Belinda? By her own admission, at the time, in part, yes. And by what she thinks now about how straightforward building is and how doable anything is when you break it down into its parts, I would say yes again. Yes because it demystified buildings and the building process. Something that people often find remote, complex and intimidating became understandable and approachable — as Belinda said, "doable." And at the same time as it demystified the process and the product, for the one involved there was no great mystery and allure, either, no grand illusions about one's own role.

However, Belinda was not only reluctant to take any great credit for her involvement in the project , but expressed doubt about its long-term influence on her as well. When I asked her if she thought that now she was less intimidated about taking things on, she replied,

> No. I find it hard to start something that I don't know that I'm going to finish beautifully. So I often don't start at all. Or I say I'm going to start it next week and never start it. So to me, for me it has not, I don't think, empowered me. umm . . . (pause) . . . I'm very willing to start something or help on something where I think someone else knows what they are doing. And I'd be willing to do something that looked cockamamie if I thought that there was one person who knew how to keep it going. So maybe that's more like the chapel. But I would not start something myself anymore.

I find myself wanting to say, O.K., so maybe she has been empowered in some ways and not in others. I notice tremendous resistance on my part to accepting that this person, who seemed so legendary in this project that felt so powerful and empowering for me, should say, "No, it didn't empower me." What? Didn't empower you, I think! Quick to find counters to her claim, I particularly noticed that among all the thirty-odd people

whom I interviewed, Belinda was the only one actually accomplishing something else while I interviewed her. The entire time we spoke, she was sewing. When the interview ended and I thanked her for her time, she said, "Oh, that's O.K., I got some mending done."

When I asked Belinda if there were any agenda I could take on for her in this study, she said, having always wanted to build a bridge, "Find me a kid who's built a bridge!" It makes me wonder. Build a chapel and it seems to you uneventful, but a bridge, now that would be really something. Could it be that the chapel is less impressive to you because you actually did it? Being no longer mysterious or unattainable, it no longer seems remarkable.

Mrs. Hall Downplays Her Own Role. Time and again this was expressed by those directly involved. Mrs. Hall does not consider her own involvement, in terms of what she actually did, particularly remarkable. At the outset of my first interview with her about the chapel, she immediately pointed out to me that the chapel was a dubious example of participatory architecture because Concord did not build the chapel from scratch, but , rather, reconstructed it. She talks of her own role in the undoing and redoing of the building as rather mundane, saying, "I was one of those, because of my age — I wasn't so old then — but I was given the job of numbering all of the basic pieces. The windows, the sash, was the worst. Well, it was irregular. One piece wasn't gonna fit in each spot." And then, as if to say, well, we didn't do anything terribly difficult, but . . . she adds, "We put ourselves into that building, though. We put it back together with so much love and caring and hard work that went into it."

So, Mrs. Hall downplays her own importance, but at the same time takes delight in describing how she and her cohorts sallied forth with a "just do it" forthrightness and determination. "If you see something that needs doing, that you want to do, and it's all right, do it." When I asked Mrs. Hall if there were any agenda she would have for me in

this study, she said that she would love it if I could get just that message and convey that spirit to people at Concord today — just do it. Don't wait around for permission Get your hands dirty. Learn by doing. Find out by trying. Don't think you have to have the answers before you start.

Other Student Carvers and Builders. What about others, and especially students involved from that time? Hard work and fun are what many of the painters, carvers and shinglers remember. Almost none saw their own role as especially vital, or even admitted to their own prowess. Mary Poole supposes she carved all the O's, but can't precisely remember. When I talked with her and her sister in the chapel, she said that carving was hard for her. She remembers going to carving class as something she had to do. There was apparently the dictum that once you had signed up, you should stick it out. But after a while, she noted, she "started to want to do it." She recounts:

> I wasn't too sure what I really wanted. Well, I had volunteered to do it, so I figured, well, I will do it. But I found it very difficult. I was not particularly manually dexterous or whatever. (She and her sister break out in laughter here)
>
> Her sister adds: Talented.
>
> She continues: Talented (more peals of laughter). But I did carve whatever the letter was. That I really don't remember. Everybody tells me it was the O's, so I guess it was the O's. . . .
>
> I comment: The O's look great up there, don't they?
>
> She: They look much too good to be mine! (all laugh heartily). . . . Much too good!

Another former student, Marian Ferguson, who was a shingler for the steeple, was similarly self-effacing. She noted:

> I remember learning to shingle. I worked on the shingling, which was a menial, but nonetheless significant, skill. You know, because of the curves, the shingles had to be cut just so. . . . I remember practicing on the bottom, where it was a straight line across. And then the advanced shinglers got towards the narrower top. I'm not sure I was ever an advanced shingler. And I do remember Molly Gregory and other kids working on it, and very much the teaching. It was a teaching . . . a learning opportunity. It wasn't a maintenance job to be done for the school, it was a craft we were learning.

Like others who worked on the building, she put no great stock in having been selected to work. Rather, she presumed it must have been a random selection, like rotating students from art class or something. She remarked, "There was certainly no particular skill I brought to it. Molly Gregory [the woodworking teacher] had the rawest of the raw material."

Similarly with Belinda, she supposed she got to go up and work on the building in the summer in New Hampshire because she "happened to live right there," across from the school, and "happened" to have been befriended by Miss Young. Luck, chance. No association with personal worth or talent. No claims to accomplishment. Just like a woman. We will explore this topic more closely in the chapters that follow on the chapel and its special relationship to women and women's issues. At present, let us note that women typically downplay their own importance and make light of their own accomplishments, often expecting to fail and attributing their successes to luck rather than their own prowess.

Clover Nicholas: A Carver Who Stakes a Claim. Not all women involved with the chapel building make so light of their own efforts, however. Clover Nicholas was the one carver I spoke with who took pride in her own work and expressed a strong personal identification with the product. She was also one of only two people specifically mentioned and remembered by name when the carving story was retold. Clover was always mentioned in relation to "her" angel on the left, while Lydia Saltus was remembered in relation to "her" angel on the right. The two elongated angels flank the main Corinthians carving, bordering each side. Figure 4.11 on the next page shows a close-up of a top section of the carving with Clover's angel.

When I asked Clover if she thought that carving the angel had given her confidence about tackling other things, she said,

> Well, it certainly doesn't hurt your ego to have everybody come into the chapel (laughs) and have your carving one of the major features. Even students that come along now who are my friends' children who have graduated from

Concord, always say, "Well, that's Clover's angel." So it kind of gives them a grounding.

Asked if the carving experience had anything to do with empowerment for her, she replied:

> Well, I think yes. I mean, having an opportunity to contribute to something visibly . . . and having people acknowledge my worth as a carver, as an artist, or whatever, by actually hanging the thing up on the wall and keeping it there . . . of course has to give one some sense of empowerment. It's not as though I campaigned to get it up. . . . it just sort of developed. I suppose it developed in part from my talent. I mean, I haven't really thought of it that way. But I think if there had been nobody who was fairly artistically talented when we were doing it, it wouldn't have been such a big project. It would have been more decorative and the carving would have been kept smaller and it wouldn't have been as bold. You know, that kind of thing.

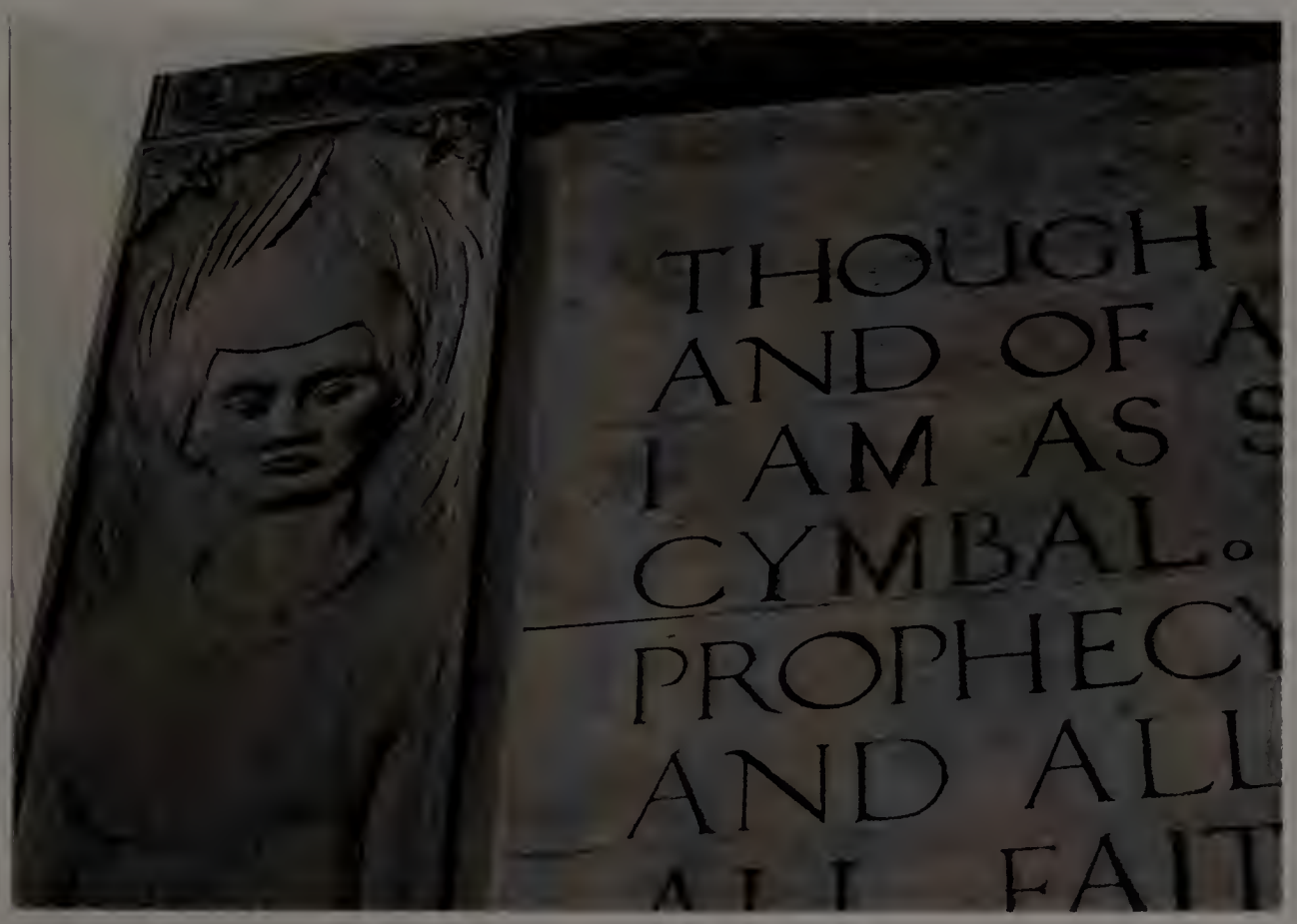


Figure 4.11. Clover's Angel, Borders Corinthians Carving

When asked if she had any agenda I could pursue on her behalf in this study, Clover replied:

> Well, I think the idea of participatory anything, particularly when you're an adolescent, is very important to me. But I think the reason you get graffiti all over the place is that people have no participation . . . they have no ownership. So the only way they can make their mark at all is to gouge or deface or . . . Some of the graffiti actually, I think, is pretty terrific.

. . . You know, our whole, our just prolonged maturation in our society, and all the things you have to stay in school to learn, doesn't really give you the opportunity to participate and to feel your own worth at a very early stage. . . . kids could be brought into the thinking about what they'd like to see, in their era . I would like to see other kids have the opportunity that I had. I mean, I know it can't be exactly the same, but just to feel that everything's not set in stone already and we <u>can</u> affect a place. You can contribute to it.

I say: Yuh. Exactly. And see, it's <u>that</u> feeling, that's what I think of as the meaning of participatory architecture.

Clover: Yuh. Oh, absolutely.

Me: Or participatory anything, really. And it's, for me, really a metaphor for anything else, you know.

Later Clover described how Molly Gregory was a Quaker and how having wood-working and involving girls in it was a very Quaker thing to do. In Clover's words:

Wood is so easy to do something with pretty fast. . . . You can make a table that you can use. You can make a bookshelf you can use. You can even make a cutting board that you can use. And it's something that you can hold in your hands and you can sand it as fine as you want and stain it and do all sorts of different things to it. But it's different from producing a <u>paper</u>. And I think that's one thing that the Quakers are very smart about.

"Different from producing a paper." As Molly Gregory might have said, "We did it because something had to happen. There was a real job at hand." Learning by doing. Not just a paper project, not make-believe. Real in a way you can touch, feel and <u>use</u>. Out of it can come a sense of efficacy. What one does matters. Efficacy and ownership. A place that invites your contribution, where you can make a difference, can leave your mark. It lets you know you belong. And others remember your part in it, too.

<u>Closing</u>

Having begun to explore the chapel's meanings and evolution, we can begin to see that it has been different things to different people at different times and in different contexts. For early carvers and builders the physical process, their connections to each other, their association of the chapel with Mrs. Hall, all come home to roost in the chapel. For more recent students and faculty, the giving of chapels holds great import and abiding

meaning. For some long-term faculty the evolution from building project to quasi-religious services to "who am I?" rites of passage make up an ever changing story of the chapel's evolution.

While this chapter has laid the groundwork for understanding the chapel's various meanings, the chapters to come elaborate on this beginning. We will explore women's special relationships to the chapel, some of the components to place-making and meaning-making, the importance of ownership, and a range of considerations and issues surrounding empowerment.

CHAPTER 5

THE POWER OF PLACE

"What do you think of when you are under the steam?"
"Of all sorts of things; of death, of my brother Joseph . . ."
"But I thought you didn't have a brother."
"Oh, that doesn't keep me from thinking of him!"

— André Gide, Journal, June 30, 1930.

Overview and Introduction

Meanings people give to places and meanings places hold might normally be considered the province of cultural anthropologists or geographers, rather than architects or educators. Yet how places acquire meaning is central for this study. This chapter explores some of the interplay between experience, meaning, memory, and context and offers parallels between the chapel and some work that architectural anthropologists and others have done to unravel how people make meaning and places out of buildings and thin air.

Time and the Evolution of Place and Meaning

The Power of Memory

Meanings change and shift over time, just as buildings do. Some meanings can persist long after physical structures have disappeared. Clare Nunes, a C.A. English teacher, told me about a study of a Boston neighborhood that found older people routinely coming together where their favorite corner and community gathering place used to be. There were no remnants of the original place, except in people's memories. Similarly, a wonderful study on the city of Bucharest by Maria de Betania Cavalcanti (1993) constructed a memory map of the city and found that places visually and functionally

nondescript and even completely erased now held huge import in people's memories. People conceived of the city as they had known it, not necessarily as it now was.

So, too, I found in talking with people that for most of those I spoke with their "real" chapel was the chapel as they had known it. Physical changes often seemed a violation, with people's own memories having more staying power than whatever changes the physical structure might exhibit. Hence the original chapel crew thought of the steeple as an unwelcome addition, for example. For many who came later the chapel did not seem to undergo major changes and many expressed that some of the chapel's strength lay in its persistence. While other things changed drastically around it, the chapel stayed the same. Continuity seems to play an important part in the chapel's enormous evocative power.

As one person said, "It looks the same, smells the same, creaks the same. The light filters in at certain times of day in the same way." Simple and accommodating. Elemental. Not insistent that things should happen inside it in only one way. A little like a sheet of paper or parchment, with a certain weight and feel, an aroma, perhaps a simple border, that says, "Come, write something here — something that matters to you. I'm listening. I'm waiting. I'm ready for whatever it may be. And I'll be ready for the next person too, though I cherish you no less."

The Chapel Reinterpreted Over Time

There is power in a place that accepts and welcomes change and redefinition, even while some things about it stay the same. Maybe it is like a family, where people know they can count on love, acceptance and continuity, yet the very context of family is about growth and change, birth and death, becoming independent, yet often returning. Janet Eisendrath, a teacher at Concord from 1952 until several years ago, offered the following explanation for the chapel and its staying power:

> Two or three years ago I just asked my class what building most meant the school to them, and to my surprise chapel by far and away was the first choice. And that was interesting to me for a couple of reasons. One is that, fascinating as the beginning story is, and I don't think it's one that should be forgotten, but

> the origins of things are constantly being reinterpreted and if they're not, they don't remain valid. So that the changes, which to many people's mind may falsify the origins, become the truth of the generation using them. That this group of kids who said that the chapel was important to them, had nothing to do with bringing it down. And probably, I mean, I would say that a hundred percent of them, unless they had parents there, some of whom would have forgotten a lot of the story, would have forgotten.
>
> . . . So that has happened over the years [the chapel being reinterpreted], which is wonderful about the building . . . If a building doesn't go through those changes, along with the people, I don't think it remains as important to a school as this chapel has been. And this chapel has remained important because it has not been rigid in its definition.

Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, in her book, Alma Mater (1984), makes a similar comment about the architecture of women's colleges she studied. She writes:

> As one looks at the women's colleges, it is clear that the meanings of their designs have been reinterpreted in successive eras by different constituents. (xviii)

Buildings and their meanings evolve. The chapel as a ritual, as well as a building, has adapted, evolved, and been reconceptualized with changing times and values. From earlier times on up to the present what happens in and around a building plays a huge part in defining what that building means for people. In earlier times the whole story of the chapel coming down and the pivotal role of Mrs. Hall, student painters, carvers and steeple builders, all combine to provide the meaning the building holds for people. Then over the years, the chapel became associated with protest, including "non-chapels" during the early seventies, and finally it has evolved as the site for "the central rite of passage for students at Concord Academy."

Not only that, but over the years moving and heart-rending memorial services have deepened the chapel's meaning for many in the community — especially for long-standing faculty members who have been personally touched by several of these. The unexpected death of a faculty member's very young child; a retired headmaster returning to the chapel for a service for his twenty year old son killed in a car crash; an inexplicable and wrenching suicide of a recent graduate; a faculty member's mother's death — these and other trying, but also importantly supportive and endearing, moments were recounted to me

time and again, spoken in a hush. Some said they go into the chapel, quietly now, alone, to remember those moments, those services, those loved ones. And joyous occasions are remembered too — weddings, celebrations for newborn babies. Past services add a whole layer of meaning onto the chapel for people, like the weathered patina on a Gothic sculpture or another thread of color woven into a tapestry already resplendent.

Ron Richardson, pictured on the next page (Figure 5.1), has taught French at Concord since 1966. His manner is warm, thoughtful, and embued with feeling. He remembers specific instances and particular students with such detail and flavor that I gained a strong sense of him as an abiding teacher, conscious of and caring about his students' lives long after they had left Concord Academy. Thinking of senior chapels, past services, and the power and import of what has taken place in the chapel over the years, he says:

> It's a very simple, modest structure, more precious than any other building on this campus, because of what its walls have heard. . . . I find sometimes the stories a little too personal. A child talks about rape, it's pretty . . . I think it's important to get that <u>out</u>, but uh, because you're horrified so . . . uh, but it does provide a lot of good.
>
> And I do think . . . I don't think I'm very mystical, but I think that <u>walls</u> that hear prayer . . . formal prayer for a long period of time as in those wonderful old places in Europe or any part of the world literally where the <u>stones</u> are warm from where people have knelt. And these walls have heard so much that I do think that simply . . . somehow those walls do empower the person. And I think that's certainly why, if you were to go into an ancient mosque or into someplace like Chartres, which is overwhelmingly beautiful from the absolutely aesthetic point of view — but there's something way beyond that. <u>Way</u> (spoken with great power) beyond it. I mean, you cannot be indifferent.
>
> It's amazing that this has come about since about 1970. I think it was [important] in the early days because the students had participated in its construction . . . But we're really very removed from that, because it's a generation ago. So now it's the words. And the words, and I do think there is an energy . . . to build. There <u>has</u> to be something. There just <u>does</u>.

I offer Ron Richardson's photograph here, to supplement his words, in part because this study was about real people — warm, tangible, heartwarming human beings, talking about things that really mattered to them. Ron Richardson is one of those people. Meeting in the cozy niche of his office, surrounded by books, he in his thick tweed jacket (the kind

you want to reach out and touch — coarse, warm, reassuring), hearing the rich sincerity and empathy that came through in his voice, watching him cock his head and brush the hair from his brow as he remembered and shared a telling detail from the past, all this and more made the experience of meeting and talking with him much more than can easily be conveyed by small black letters appearing on white paper. He is much more fully textured and richly colored than black and white, much more multi-dimensional and simultaneous than one letter typed right after another. So I offer you his picture as partial compensation for doing him so little justice.

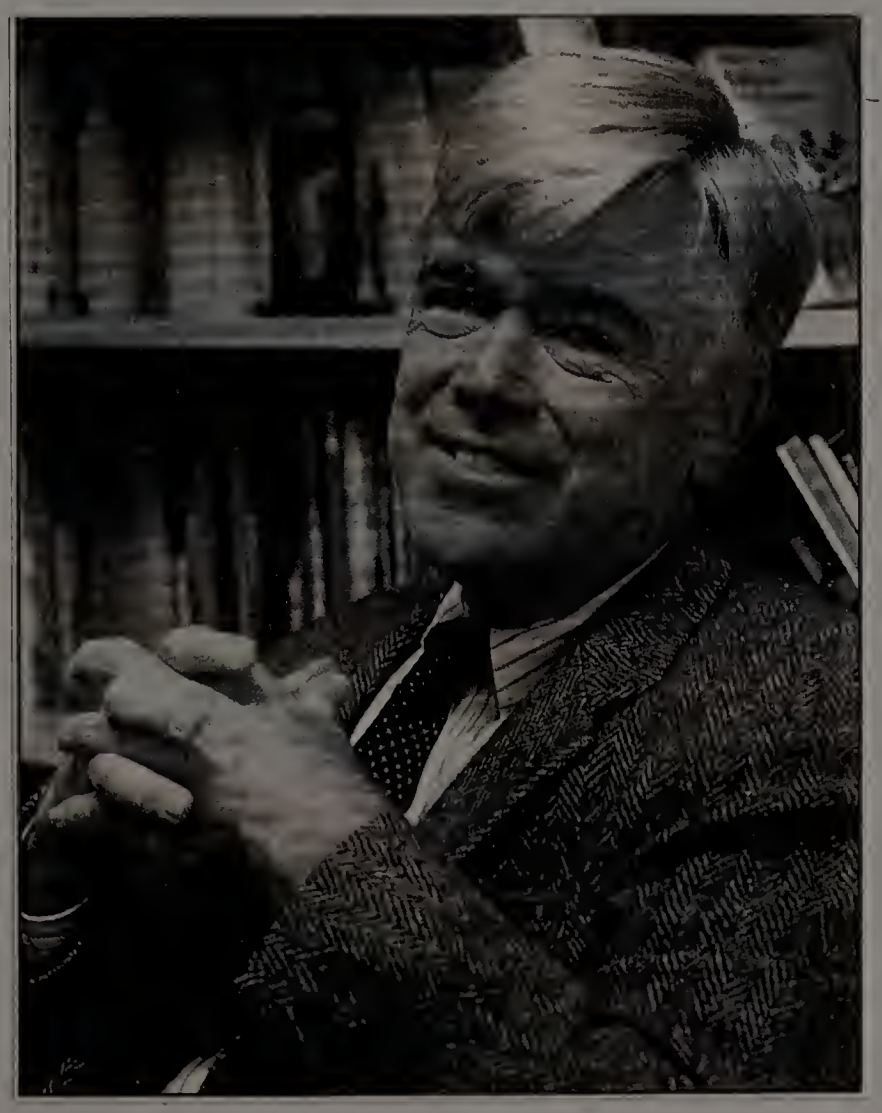


Figure 5.1. Ron Richardson, C.A. French Teacher

Buildings Absorb & Emanate Energy & Meaning

So, there is the notion that the building itself, because of what has happened in it, absorbs some of that energy and import and gives it back to people. One student I spoke

with said that as a tour guide she would bring new families into the chapel and say that this building was incredibly special to the entire school. Then she would ask them to just stand there, in the chapel, in silence for a few moments and she thought they would see what she meant. Speaking about this, she paused a moment with me now. Then, exhaling with a telling and satisfied breath, she said that visitors invariably replied that they could, indeed, see just what she meant. Ahhh.

The idea that buildings absorb vital energy from what transpires in them, that they reverberate with that energy and transmit it over time falls more to poets to speak about than to scientists. Architects for centuries seem to have assumed that buildings had a kind of magical, evocative power, although few of them speak about it. American architect, Louis Kahn, used to ask, "What does a brick want to be?", as if the things that make up architecture have some intention, some consciousness, some sort of life (Kahn, 1969). Religion, too, is the province of such intangibles, of immeasurability, of spirit. And religions have long proclaimed certain spaces, certain places, as sacred. Some Eastern religions (I think especially of Buddhism) have the idea of physical things absorbing and then reverberating with vital energy, in part because of what has transpired around them. Things are thought to acquire a kind of emotive patina over time, weathered and colored by the energy and focus put into them.

Poet and essayist Robert Graves has written a wonderful essay on this, explaining the Islamic notion of "baraka" (1961), referring to the vital energy reverberating and building up in things through the focus and intention put into them. For Graves baraka comes from being hand-made and being touched again and again, joyously and lovingly. He writes:

> Anything made by hand has a certain glow of life. Factory-made objects are born dead — however apt their design, however sound their construction, and must have life breathed into them by affectionate use. A veteran typewriter of which you have grown fond, seems to reciprocate your feelings and even encourage the flow of thought. Though at first a lifeless assemblage of parts, it eventually comes alive. . . As for cameras — any good photographer is horror-struck by the loss of a camera that has grown to be part of himself: even if he buys an identical model, there will be a delay of anything from six months to two years before it learns to take his own inimitable sort of picture. Scientists cannot explain such phenomena, and therefore dispute the facts. Let them! Baraka will never be a scientific term.

> . . . The New York Metropolitan Museum contains no less than three Stradivarius violins: none of them kept alive by playing. (p. 101)

Baraka in architecture is the presence of warmth and well-being that buildings absorb through touch and use. Graves further describes anti-baraka, or the German notion of "unheimlichkeit," as "a sinister unhomeliness," readily perceptible in some buildings.

This runs parallel to Plato's thought that everything is idea or *edos*, which modern physics seems to bear out. Physician, prolific writer, and speaker Deepok Chopra (1987, 1992) expresses similar ideas, noting that modern physics postulates that existence fluctuates between acting like a particle and a wave, giving weight and substance to the idea of "vibes." Vibrations may be at the very heart of the universe, with everything and everyone interconnected and interpenetrating. Apart from context, from happening, nothing exists at all. All of life is in the doing of it, the interaction, being. We are changing, shifting, evolving events, not hard cold immutable facts or fixed objects. In Chopra's words:

> Sensory experience tells me that the objects of our perception are solid and we know that they're ultimately made up of atoms which in turn are particles that are whizzing at dizzying speeds round huge empty spaces and that these particles aren't material objects but fluctuations of energy in a huge void of information and energy. So maybe we shouldn't trust the senses that much. . . . I am whatever is going on, whatever is happening. What I seem to be is just a certain quality of attention to myself. (1992)

In terms of the chapel, it all makes perfect sense. But this paper has not set out to discover hidden psycho-social forces that link human beings to the cosmos. I will say, however, that one day when I returned from seeking out the chapel's origins in New Hampshire, much of this came close to home. I had bought several pumpkins in New Hampshire, grown right next door to the chapel's original site. I had spent a long time selecting these pumpkins, chosen, each one, for its special balance or shape. On the long drive back to Concord, I began to think that it would be fun to put one of the pumpkins on the chapel steps, grown as it was so close to the old site. And I specifically thought of one pumpkin I had chosen that had a beautiful curly stem, a little reminiscent of the curved chapel steeple.

As it happened, it was dark by the time I reached Concord and I had hoped to catch up with my son, Noah. So Noah and I did meet briefly, and then we were each rushing off — he to study and me to drive the hour and a half home from Concord. It was just getting dark. I was in a hurry and distracted, thinking about the schedule and hoping to get on the road before it was fully night. But in a last-minute dash, Noah and I hurried over to the chapel to deposit this pumpkin on the steps and be gone. So, not thinking much about it, but still enthusiastic about the idea and the connections, I hastily plunked the pumpkin down of the chapel steps. No sooner had I set it down, when my whole body felt a sudden, magical tingling sensation and I literally saw a shower of tiny stars all around me, just as in Walt Disney movies when the fairy Godmother waves her magic wand and a host of tiny stars descend.

I am not sure what that was, but I know it made me think differently about this project. I thought, hmm, maybe I'm meant to be making connections between New Hampshire and Concord. Or maybe those connections already palpably exist, and this is a wake-up call to that effect. Or maybe this is trying to let me know that all sorts of things that we cannot see or touch do exist, and that reality is mysterious and magical and filled with all sorts of wonder of which we human beings get just the slightest hint. If nothing else, it said to me, there is more here than meets the eye, and you're a part of it, too. But least you abandon reading altogether, fearful that I may have succumbed to mere imagination and to wild flights of fancy, I return you now to more sedate and carefully reasoned views.

The Concept of Place: Its Importance for Architecture and Meaning

In architectural discourse, one way in which people talk about the more qualitative aspects of buildings is through the notion of "place." Places, unlike mere buildings, go beyond bricks and mortar to embrace the realm of meaning. So distinct is this concern that a journal called "Places" emerged in the late 1980s to address just this aspect of the built

environment. Donlyn Lyndon has edited "Places" and skillfully articulated its realm of concern. He writes:

> When considering criticism of place, it is not the works produced but the way in which they become part of the larger structure and the way they enter into the lives of the people who encounter them that are the subject of concern . . . Public places are loaded with significance because they are lodged in the imaginations of many people and structure their interaction . . . Places are spaces to which people can give the dimensions of their imaginations and which they can hold in their minds. They are, at base, segments of memory, albeit extended ones.
>
> Places become distinct when they become familiar, when we have matched them to events of our daily lives, gradually discerned the features of their configurations and watched the light move across their surfaces in various hours and seasons. They become familiar by being renewed, reappearing with some constancy in our midst. We know where we are because we've been there before. How much we may know about where we are has to do with what we bring to the place and with how much it has been formed to pique our curiosity, to provoke recollections and to make itself available for inquiry.
>
> Places reflect aspects of ourselves as novels do, but places are not paginated. We must seek the stories in them, piecing together the evidence of our senses and joining in the action.
>
> Places, like people, have histories. As a result, some are secretive, some bold, some impossibly at odds with themselves. To know places well is difficult. It requires tolerance, imaginative effort and a resistance to the huckster's images. Only through sustained attention do we see glimpses of community, of what we might have done or might yet do if we are not irreparably singular. These are reasons enough to need places that encourage recognition: that ignite us to think about them again — and with passion.
>
> Built places of real distinction require effort; an effort in the making and a corresponding effort of recognition. They respond to our queries because they embody careful, particular thoughts. They may bear the traces of many imaginings, the scars of conflicting territorial claims, the quirks of an obsessed attention, but they have always a conjunction of shapes that is unique to the place. (Lyndon, 1987, p. 2)

I think readily of Mrs. Hall saying, "We put ourselves into that building, though. We put it back together with so much love and caring and <u>hard work</u> that went in to it." I think of my son, Noah, a year an a half after his graduation from Concord, going back to visit the school with a former C.A. classmate. He said that they walked to the chapel, intent on going in, but when they got to the building they were so overwhelmed that neither of them could enter. It was simply too much for them.

A Typology of Attachment to Place

Place holds the power of recognition, of remembering, allowing one to relive powerful experiences and past moments. In her work on people's attachments to places and the meanings they associate with places, Setha Low identifies several salient characteristics of places that cement their meaning and import. She articulates a typology of place attachment, positing six kinds of symbolic links between people and places, in her case illustrated through people's attachment to land. Her typology includes: 1) genealogy, linking through history and lineage; 2) loss of land or destruction of community; 3) economic links via ownership, inheritance, or politics; 4) cosmological links via religious, spiritual, or mythological relationships; 5) links through religious or secular pilgrimages or critical cultural events and celebrations; and finally, 6) narrative links through story-telling and place-naming (Low, 1992, p. 165-185).

History/Genealogy. Several of the variables in Setha Low's typology are at play in the Concord chapel. The linkage through history and genealogy exists in the chapel, both in people's awareness of the chapel being taken down and put back up, in it coming from somewhere else and having another history, and in the familial linkages of alumnae who worked on the chapel having children, nieces, nephews, brothers, or sisters going there as students much later. Or consider the familial link of a young New Hampshire camper recruited to sing in the church choir when the chapel was still in use as a church in New Hampshire. Decades later his own daughter went to Concord Academy and when he sat in the chapel, hearing her Senior chapel, he wondered if the pews remembered him.

In addition there are the links that longtime faculty bring with them, remembering the early days of the chapel at Concord, and recounting its evolution over nearly thirty years of use at the school. Occasionally I was surprised to discover even more extensive genealogical links, not part of the popular narrative about the chapel. I found, for example, that the face of one of the long angels that flanks the big Corinthians 13 carving was modeled after the carver's brother. Clover Nicholas, who carved the angel, is one of the

few carvers mentioned by name by those who were on hand in those early days. This was presumably because of both the captivating quality of the carving she did and the fact that she was given individual responsibility for the carving, unlike most of the other work that was a collaborative, group effort. Clover carved the long angel to the left of the carving, and Lydia Saltus carved the one on the right. In Clover's case the genealogical link is further cemented by the fact that her own son later attended Concord and she sees a strong facial resemblance between her son and her brother. So for Clover, seeing the angel in the chapel immediately brings to mind both her own role as a carver and the actual persons of her son and her brother.

Similarly, strong associations with historical and pivotal familial events taking place in the chapel build familial links and personal genealogical meanings for people — births, deaths, marriages, and special commemorative services. Not only do religious and family rituals occur in the chapel adding to its importance for people, but these interweave with the familial, genealogical links and further elaborate them.

Rituals and Rites. In this chapel, in particular, the cultural/spiritual/emotional rite of passage that takes place in the chapel takes on mythic proportions and attains enormous institutional and familial import. Some describe giving a chapel as "going from childhood to adulthood." One boy said that the day he gave his chapel was when he became an adult. Some have confronted such barriers and obstacles through their chapels that they literally describe their lives as "before and after their chapels," as if giving a chapel transformed their identities. So the chapel has enormous significance because it is literally, ritualistically, so intimately tied to identity, and to identity transforming, becoming.

Loss and Rescue. In the sense of loss, then, too, this place is associated with the loss of the old identity and emergence of the new person. Loss and transforming identity occur also in the dismantling, moving, and reassembling of the chapel, almost as a direct parallel with young people transforming themselves as they grow into adulthood, shedding

an old skin and emerging anew. From the standpoint of the New Hampshire site and their experience, the chapel represents loss, but also rescue and preservation. The place becomes more honored and more precious for having experienced decay, abandonment, and resurrection. And time and again people using the chapel now mention those earlier times, as if echoes of history and major transformations reverberate within those plaster walls, those long touched pews, and patient timbers. Samples of comments made now follow:

> I also like the idea of the structure being saved, rescued, that part I find very appealing. and the fact that it's here and somehow has a history that stretches back beyond this school. I feel as though it gives us a tradition that's older than we are. (Katy Rea Schmitt, CA science teacher, past CA parent & '62 alumna)

> Something that I think is a wonderful commentary, that it was a little building, sitting quietly by itself . . . um, abandoned. Abandoned in New Hampshire. And for sale for a hundred dollars or whatever it was . . . And some eagle-eyed faculty member saw it and came to Betty Hall and said, "Look, here's the chapel that you've always wanted. There's just this little problem. It's not close by and to get it here we're gonna have to take it apart." Yes, I think that must have been extraordinary. I mean, I wasn't here, but I have friends who were here, and I think it must have been an amazing . . . raising. I think it's always occupied this quite special place, perhaps because of its beginnings. I've often thought, who sat on these benches? Who sat in New Hampshire on these benches . . . before we did. . . before it got moved here. (Mary Murray Coleman, CA Admissions Director)

One student said, in response to my asking what agendas he might have for me in my study of the chapel,

> I'd be sorta curious about, um, like the past. You know, I know it came from New Hampshire. But then, who built it there and who were those people? Like tracing it back. I think that would be cool. And who were involved in all this bringing it down from New Hampshire and all that. Just its past sort of. (Jeremy Tamanini, as a sophomore, class of '94. His mother was CA '61)

An alumna, from the class of '66, said,

> One thing that bothered me about the history of the chapel being moved here, and I don't know if anyone's ever expressed that, that you've interviewed. But it bothered me, did it really belong here? Did the rich elite. . . have the right to remove it from its original site. And I don't know, the real history about who was saving what from what. (Rachel Duane Lee, CA '66)

Loss and historic connections to times and people lost show up, then, in the meanings and reverberations people feel in the present. In a parallel way, the chapel's presence is

still felt in New Hampshire. I was surprised, on visiting New Hampshire to ferret out the chapel's original site, by the presence the reconstructed chapel holds for a couple I visited in New Hampshire. The Prestons live near the original chapel site in the farmhouse built several generations ago by their family. Mr. Preston's mother had a regular pew in the church before it fell into disuse and was eventually moved. As I met with them in their dining room and talked about the chapel, Virginia Preston excitedly opened her sideboard drawer to bring out Concord Academy's booklet about the chapel, which she found immediately with really no special search or rummaging, so close was it to hand. She and her husband proudly shared the booklet and its story with me. Furthermore, she and others I spoke with in the area were extremely happy that Concord Academy had rescued the building and had so caringly restored it. And, yes, they did think of it as having been rescued from a progressive and otherwise probably fatal decline. Indeed, I was further surprised to learn that several people from the original New Hampshire area had visited the chapel on various occasions in Concord, just to see how it was doing — like a legacy. So, legacy and loss combine to create meaning.

Critical Cultural Events. Two of Setha Low's other categories for place attachment, religious or spiritual relationships and pilgrimages or critical cultural events and celebrations are also pivotal in the chapel. The genealogical, historical links through marriages, births, and deaths are celebrated and memorialized in the chapel, tying familial and religious/cultural meanings together. Certainly the entire ritual of giving and receiving chapels is central both to the chapel and its meanings and to the very pulse of Concord Academy. Students, faculty, and administrators alike describe the chapel as the central rite in the life of a Concord Academy student. And the rite itself is inextricably tied to the place of the chapel. Witness the presentation itself being referred to as "giving a chapel," not giving a talk "in the chapel." Another revealing observation mentioned by a great many of those I interviewed was that the kind of thing that transpires in the chapel as people give their chapels couldn't possibly happen in the other space where the whole school routinely

gathers, the Performing Arts Center (popularly referred to as the P.A.C.). In fact, occasionally a student does choose to do his or her "chapel" in the P.A.C., and yet it is still called a "chapel."

Other events central in the school's culture happen in the chapel. Newly arrived students and their families crowd into the chapel for an initial gathering and school greeting, followed by parents' good-byes to their offspring. Sunday vespers occur in the chapel, with special all-school honored guests and speakers or performers. Baccalaureate takes place in the chapel, almost as the last personal gift of the seniors to the school, where seniors can choose to offer short statements or performances, as if a medley — a class-wide series of mini-chapels in a way. And finally graduation itself happens in the senior lawn right outside the chapel, where the senior class stands and faces the chapel, with their friends, family, and classmates gathered before them. Indeed, recently the senior class has gathered first in the chapel at graduation and then processed out to the lawn from the chapel.

And in times of crisis there have been spontaneous school gatherings in the chapel — when President John F. Kennedy was shot, more recently during the Gulf War crisis, or the very next year, in the aftermath of the riots following the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles. So, yes, there is no doubt that critical cultural events and celebrations are intimately associated with the chapel and infuse it with meaning.

Pilgrimages. Pilgrimages happen, too, as three times a week people leave their books, briefcases, and notes behind them to enter the chapel unencumbered. The whole school gathers, streaming in from dorm or cafeteria, office or parking lot, and then, fifteen minutes later, returning. They come at a specified time, for a specified purpose, and with a sense of the import of the occasion. All together, all at once, the whole school (by "whole" school most people mean the faculty, students, and major administrators) Recently graduated students often return specifically to attend the chapel of a friend from a class below them, many times coming from far afield, underscoring the pilgrimage nature of the

event. Parents and siblings frequently wend their way, too. The daily chapel pilgrimage has been pictured for years on wide-ranging academy publications (see figure 6.4).

Set Apart. Siting the chapel alone, off the beaten track, and out of the daily bustle has important consequences. It makes pilgrimages possible. You have to go off to the chapel to get to it. It also underscores the chapel's inviolability and special, reserved status. In Gendered Spaces (1992), Daphne Spain notes that status and separation are closely linked. Think of the boss's inner sanctum in an office setting or the estate with a main house well distant and hidden from the road. Spain notes that being set apart insures privacy and secrecy. If the chapel were not set apart would people think their secrets safe? Spain writes:

> Most status differences are reinforced by subtle forms of spatial segregation. Instead of being visibly manifest in spatial barriers, status hierarchies are often determined in secret. Secrets, in turn, are preserved often through spatial boundaries. . . . Place, power and knowledge interact to create secrecy . . . seclusion reinforces secrecy's effects. (1992, p.18)

As one student remarked of the chapel, "It feels as if the building will not reveal secrets."

The Chapel as Sacrosanct and Reserved. It is key here that the chapel is reserved for critical events and is not otherwise cluttered with incessant or inconsequential gatherings. Indeed, reserving the chapel for matters of import and only for special occasions gives it all the more meaning.

For me, the junior class holding class meetings in the chapel seems distinctly incongruous with its otherwise sacrosanct use. When, on one of my visits, I happened to experience a junior class meeting in the chapel, I was taken aback that such a casual, informal, and mundane event would be scheduled for and thought appropriate to the chapel. In a somewhat similar vein, several people mentioned that the administration had begun to hold all-school meetings in the chapel, particularly when some thorny issue in the school or disciplinary matter was at hand. Those who mentioned these meetings had considerable misgivings about them and especially about them being held in the chapel. There was some sense expressed that these meetings were in some way trying to appropriate the sense of

sanction that the chapel offered, without deserving it. Or perhaps I should say that the concern and reservations people expressed to me were that mandatory all-school meetings orchestrated by the administration and perceived as top-down, dominating, and judgmental might be masquerading behind the safe, accepting facade of the chapel. This was as if to say, if we meet and present an issue in the chapel, we naturally assume the cloak of collegiality and the demeanor of community solidarity. We assume we are meeting heart to heart. But in every case are we?

Protecting the Chapel Against Incursions. Those who questioned this use of the chapel expressed a natural desire to protect the chapel against incursions of this kind, as if they were an offense both to the individuals in the school, the school as a whole, and the chapel itself. Since the speakers expressed some concern about the possible unwelcome nature of their remarks, I will anonymously quote a sample of these comments here, even though the speakers themselves requested no such anonymity. Suffice it to say, these views were presented by both students and faculty.

> There may be something manipulative going on . . . I might get fired for this, but I think there might be an attempt to hold certain meetings in the chapel to give them an aura that they lack . . . I even think that to hold a discipline — it was essentially a disciplinary meeting. To be called in and have said, "We don't like the way things have been going. We want you all to go off and discuss it. Concord Academy is at the crossroads. Blah, blah, blah." (The speaker shifts to a firm, staccato, almost military, commander-like tone.) I mean, that doesn't smack to me of community spirit, really, or the kind of coming together that you want in the chapel. . . . I think that to endow meetings with sanctity that really aren't about sacred — aren't about values . . . Or to think because a meeting is held in the chapel that it is about values . . . I mean, it's very tricky business. I think fooling around with symbols is dangerous. This remark just really occurred to me or this thought . . . I may have been simmering all this time. But that's what I am thinking.

Another person I spoke with said:

> . . . the chapel kind of has this talismanic quality . . . that I think is almost getting abused within the life of the school right now. Because since the chapel has this kind of sacrosanct quality, we've been having more and more things like community meetings and stuff like that in the chapel. . . . I think the reason why the chapel is so powerful is that it's one of the few spaces on the campus that's really seen as a student owned space. I mean, it's really perceived as a student space. I've often heard kids say things sort of like, "Well, when I give my chapel I'm gonna tell people." You know. So it's really seen as one of the few spaces where kids can really say what they think. And I almost feel like it's

> getting co-opted now by having all these community meetings and stuff in there. . . . I think students are starting to resent those meetings cause they sort of feel like this is <u>our</u> space and you're invading <u>our</u> space with <u>your</u> agenda.

During my entire study a concern about who might read these interviews rarely surfaced, but around this topic there was both concern and a sense of caution. These might be dangerous waters. Already we noted above one person saying, "I might get fired for this, but . . ." I interjected after that, "We don't have to quote you." The reply was, "True." The next person I've quoted above said, after talking briefly about this issue of whose agenda was appropriate for the chapel, "I don't know how much of this is gonna be seen or read by anyone else, so I'm trying to choose my words carefully."

Another comment about this administrative use of the chapel was expressed this way by a student:

> I guess if there's a community issue, they bring it to the chapel, because there's supposedly more respect for each individual. It's supposed to be a place of, you know, no applause. There's a lot of respect in the building. Um . . . community things, sensitive issues, tend to be brought up in the chapel.
>
> I ask: Does it feel good to you, or right at the time? How's it feel?
>
> He replies: I think that a lot of issues at the school are talked about in such an odd fashion. I mean, I <u>don't</u> agree with the fact that there's really no debate in the school. It's sort of like, stand up, voice your opinion, sit down. . . . I think the biggest fear is that there'll be a lot of name-calling and back and forth if there was . . . like a semi-debate. But I think that that's what we need to work towards, of getting it . . . not name-calling. Cause, I mean, you go out into college, you go out into the real world, voicing your opinion and actually backing up your opinion is one of the most important things. . . .

So we see here resistance to appropriation of the chapel and its aura of sanctity, underlying respect for the level of import and real community spirit associated with the chapel, and some assertion of student and community ownership of the chapel. All these combine to work against frivolous or blatantly self-interested and manipulative uses of the chapel. So administrative disciplinary meetings are resisted in the chapel, just as a politician campaigning from a church pulpit would be considered inappropriate. Like other sacred places, people can easily feel violated by others using the chapel in ways they consider either crass or exploitative.

Early in my study of the chapel, I was surprised and delighted to learn from one of the faculty members of the Chapel Committee, Clare Nunes, that Tom Wilcox had asked John O'Connor and her to serve on the Chapel Committee, in her words, "to protect the chapel from his [Tom's] incursions." Clare commented that she and John were considered the faculty hippies at the time and would be thought most likely to protect students' rights.

Ownership. Feeling violated is closely associated with the feeling of ownership of the chapel. Ownership is central to the chapel and is closely associated with a feeling of entitlement. The powerful sense of student ownership of the place creates an aura of permission, or inviolability, where students presume a wide range of freedoms in the chapel, like the student saying, "I can't wait until my chapel, then I'll really say what I think."

This freedom is partially extended to faculty as well, in part, it seems, because the power positions of students and faculty are more in balance. When it comes to the administration, students and faculty seem hesitant to say anything goes. Perhaps the power positions are too unequal for students and some faculty not to feel imposed upon by administrative proclamations delivered in the chapel. Administrative messages can apparently be perceived as too top-down or too judgmental to be accepted as appropriate for the chapel. In another space that might not be the case, but the aura of student entitlement, ownership, and identity is so strong in the chapel that it creates a powerful deterrent to incursions that might be construed as manipulative or conscious power plays.

So, another of Setha Low's categories, ownership, plays a central role in the chapel. Numerous steps, from students working physically on the chapel structure, to naming the chapel the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel and thereby partly reasserting alumnae connections to the place, have helped establish the chapel as student and community centered and "owned." Tom Wilcox pointed out, however, that renaming the chapel the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel met some resistance, precisely around issues of ownership. People said it is everyone's chapel, not just hers. Perhaps for that reason the name has been slow to catch

on. People may feel too strongly in a fundamental, gut kind of way, that the chapel was and always will be community property, not claimed or named by any one, but intimately owned by each one and held in common and in trust for those yet to come.

People who know the story of the chapel know that it will always be associated with Mrs. Hall to some extent and that it can accommodate being hers and everyone else's who put themselves into it. Ownership here goes well beyond dollar bills and titles or bills of sale. Much more hard work and love went into the chapel than dollar bills or signatures on pieces of paper will ever reflect. I am reminded of Jonathan Kozol's book about the Cuban Literacy Campaign, Children of the Revolution (1978). At one point well into the book, I think of Kozol describing talking with the Cuban Minister of Education and saying that he hates to bring it up but that his editors and readers back in the States are going to want to know how much the literacy campaign cost. The minister leans back, takes some time, and says, as I remember it, "Well, you have thousands of volunteers and all of their time. Then there is the cost of the books, the lanterns, the medical care, the transportation, the pencils. Of course there is all that, and we could calculate these things. But if you think that money measures the real cost, you will never understand the revolution."

Blood, sweat and tears have no dollar value. They are truly priceless. Beyond the physical labor of those early days, when love had a tangible output, now another clear avenue toward ownership is through people putting so much of themselves in so courageous and heartfelt a way into both giving and receiving chapels. People's level of involvement, of focus, of attention. gives them a clear and legitimate claim to ownership.

In public places in particular, ownership can be cemented, or usurped, or undermined consciously and visibly by strategic placement and positioning, both in a physical and a programmatic sense. Though many people stated how strongly the chapel is felt to be the students', the administration opens and closes the year with chapel talks, underscoring their preeminent position and strategic use of and entitlement to the chapel. In the chapel's earliest days at C.A., administrative chapel stories took center stage. Faculty chapels were

also frequent and expected. As a result the chapel felt as though it belonged to the school as a whole and especially to Mrs. Hall, particularly given her delight in the whole chapel-moving story and her commitment to telling and retelling that story.

It was sometime after Mrs. Hall's time that faculty were no longer required to give chapels. Once that happened, student chapels predominated over more rare faculty or administrative ones, shifting the balance of power in terms of who had the floor most frequently and most visibly. The natural consequence was for the chapel to become more and more seen as owned by the students.

I was surprised to learn that Tom Wilcox, Headmaster since '81, made a significant change in the power balance and feeling of student privilege and ownership in the chapel by moving the faculty from the balcony to the ground floor and back of the chapel. Prior to this, the faculty sat in the balcony, a perch which made them one step removed from the students and which suggested to some a position of distance, judgment, and preeminence. Only one person described this shift to me, but she saw it as particularly significant.

> Tom had the faculty sit downstairs instead of upstairs, which I think was a very good thing to do. I thought that was a very good move for a lot of reasons. One was from the standpoint of noise. But I don't think he did it so much for that. I think he wanted the faculty downstairs . . . There ought to be some places and theoretically democracy's one. Theoretically it was true in the medieval church. There is a labyrinth on the floor of Chartres which the king walked on his hands and knees along with you and me, if we happened to be there on those days. Very important. . . . there are days when the taboo goes off the hunting of certain animals. So maybe that's true in every society. There <u>have</u> to be times when the king is, uh . . . not the king. (Janet Eisendrath, C.A. history teacher '52-'91)

Removing the faculty from the balcony seemed to relieve them of the need to judge, or the perception that they were the judges. No longer above and looking down on the students, they could assume a more egalitarian and familial stance. Now that the sophomores sit in the balcony, this distance and sense of removal is often associated with them. Everyone is one in the chapel, except, perhaps, for the sophomores. Time and again people I spoke with remarked that the whole community fully <u>attends</u> in the chapel, in the sense of full presence and focus, but several people followed this observation by adding that they were not completely sure about the sophomores. Most attributed this to the

sophomore position up in the balcony and conveyed some reservations about the sophomores, as if their position made them both less invested and more judgmental. Some seniors even commented that after the initial shock and sense of amazement at chapels that young, first year students would encounter, a more sophomoric skepticism and distance were to some extent to be expected.

The most hesitant and critical comments I heard about chapels from students came from sophomores. Is looking down on the chapel both figurative and literal? In the drawing class I met with, where students ranged from first year students to seniors, only the sophomores expressed some reservations about senior chapels, with one girl openly noting that she found them often predictable, repetitive and actually boring. The seniors in the class took open offense to these observations and vigorously defended the custom and its importance. Juniors, too, in the class, seemingly anticipating the approach of their own senior years and important chapel opportunities, spoke with reverence and some awe about the entire process. So, yes, ownership, and varying degrees of ownership and investment are found in the chapel and these are not disassociated from rank, physical positioning, and symbolic appearance. Since ownership is so critical, the next chapter explores it in more depth.

Storytelling. Another of Setha Low's categories for place attachment is storytelling, something particularly central in the chapel. First is the telling and retelling of the story of the chapel being found and taken down, then reassembled at the school, replete with the fascinating story of the carvings, and, though less often told, of the steeple. The telling of these stories is, to some extent, ritualized, in that key faculty or administrators will retell this story, from Mrs. Hall's early first-hand accounts, to Tom Wilcox's more recent recounting, to Phil McFarland's historical renditions, and even including my own retelling, which is by now a regular feature of Alumnae Days. And it is not that these are mandated or predictable, but they do recur with enough regularity, and to the entire school, that the story is handed down. We noted, however, that there have been times during the past

thirty years when the story faded from community knowledge, as Peter Wallis reminded us with his own story of the chapel in the 1970s. And, even though the story has been written in both Phil McFarland's history of the school and in the booklet about the chapel, each of these sees less regular exposure in the community than one might presume or hope. Nevertheless, the stories persist.

Students and the Admissions Office play an important role in the preservation and retelling of stories. Countless people I spoke with remarked on telling the story of the chapel in their roles as tour guides for the school. The telling and retelling of stories not only keeps the stories and history alive but it allows the storyteller and listener to make the events and the place more their own. By telling and hearing the stories, one vicariously relives and recreates the reality. In "Imagining History" (1991), Andra Makler writes, "To recount the past is to reclaim it, to reevaluate ourselves in relation to others." Anita Plath Helle (1991) notes, "Stories keep history moving, even as it moves in and through us." (p. 64)

Beyond the historical narratives about the chapel's origins at Concord, storytelling is central to the giving of chapels. People giving chapels are giving their stories, sharing their stories, with the community. So small wonder that to "give a chapel" means literally to share your story, or whatever you choose to offer, like a story, with the community that is Concord Academy. So "chapel" takes on two meanings, both the building as a physical place, and the event itself of giving and receiving a chapel. The chapel gains all the more meaning because it is not just a place that stories are told about, but it is a place specifically devoted to the telling and sharing of stories.

In naming too, the place becomes synonymous with the story. People talk about Jamie's chapel or Evie's chapel, meaning when they shared their stories in the chapel, in their chapels. Their chapel means their story. Giving their stories there also cements their temporary ownership of the chapel. People remember their chapels, which is to say the entire event of giving their chapel and having it received by the community. And then there

are the stories, accumulated over the years, of what transpires in the chapel, from the most scandalous moment to the most sublime. These, too, become part of the lore of the chapel, part of the shared and always evolving narrative.

Place: Summing Up

In sum, the concept of place is helpful and apt for the chapel. From Setha Low's taxonomy to Donlyn Lyndon's more poetic and evocative descriptors for place, the notion of place and its accompanying concerns are sufficiently encompassing and grounded in human experience to be helpful to us here. The idea of place is clearly embedded in personal, everyday experience, too, not in isolated or remote professional language and preoccupations of architects and planners or removed academicians.

Places are real. They are immediate. They have texture and feel. They are three dimensional and kinesthetic. And they have all sorts of symbolic power and connotations, evoking memories and feelings and representing all kinds of personal and communal associations. Places have power. And to talk about spaces in terms of place is to talk about people, about the interactions between people and spaces, about meaning and intention, about continuity and change. It is to recognize that time is an important dimension in architecture. Things change over time. How people use places and interpret places and find or make meaning in places changes over time. How buildings allow or frustrate those changes is part of what gives spaces identity and meaning over time. It is part of what spaces becoming places is all about.

To talk about buildings as places shifts the perspective away from singular, isolated, timeless artifact to contextual environments where what happens in spaces matters. How people use places and understand places and come to cherish or despise places matters. The stories they tell about places matter. The web of interconnections they weave around and through places matters. To consider place is to put people at the heart of things.

CHAPTER 6

OWNERSHIP: STAKING A CLAIM & BELONGING

Each of us harbors a homeland, a landscape we naturally comprehend. By understanding the dependability of a place, we anchor ourselves as trees.
— Terry Tempest Williams, 1994

Why Ownership Matters.

The issue of ownership is both central and complex. Ownership is central to a feeling of belonging and connection and to a sense of entitlement or license. These are pivotal to people feeling permission to be themselves, to transform at least a part of the world in relation to themselves, to see the world as a reflection of themselves, and to care about and interact with things beyond themselves. Ownership and its association with belonging, connection, and entitlement have to do with how people feel about the chapel, what they do there, or feel they can do there, and with what the chapel means to them. Ownership raises the question of whose chapel, which chapel, when, where, and in what context?

When I first talked with C.A. Headmaster Tom Wilcox about this project, introducing my focus on the chapel in terms of participatory architecture and empowerment, the first thing he said, spontaneously and without elaboration, was, "Ownership." How is ownership or a sense of ownership established? What does it entail and what are its consequences? This chapter explores these questions in relation to the Concord Academy chapel, the Elizabeth B. Hall chapel, my chapel, our chapel, the chapel that once stood in West Barnstead, New Hampshire. Ownership is about connections and relationships, continuity and change, license and constraint.

Change: Challenges Old & Asserts New Ownership

The issue of ownership of the chapel relates directly to change and one's role in change or position in relation to change. How people think of the chapel and what the chapel "really" is to each of them is intimately connected to how it was for them, in their time and their special circumstances relative to the events surrounding the chapel.

Conflicting Vignettes of Connection & Ownership

Consider the following. An alumna from well before the chapel's time at C.A. reveals that she had always resented the chapel for spoiling the beautiful formal garden beloved in her own days at the school. Yet for most who at C.A. since the chapel's arrival, it is almost impossible to imagine the school without the chapel. My son Noah said he never fully visualized the chapel as having come from New Hampshire until he saw a picture of the lawn and garden without the chapel. Others said that they felt as though the chapel had always been at C.A. To assist the reader a picture of the formal garden and lawn, before the chapel came to C.A. follows on the next page (figure 6.1).

Before the chapel, this lawn was the site for the spring May Day festivities, where girls ritualistically welcomed in the spring. C.A.'s Fall, 1989 Alumnae Magazine cover shows girls dancing around the May pole on the lawn (figure 6.2). Ironically, the inside cover is a full page picture of the chapel. Part of me has to think there is an intentional commentary on Christianity supplanting rites of spring. May Day festivities thrived from 1924 until the spring of 1960 (McFarland, 1986), so the chapel and May Day overlapped from '57-'60. May Day at C.A. was more carefree singing and dancing than pagan rite, with families in full attendance. Alumna Mary Thorpe Ellison, CA '40, notes:

> My happiest memories from C.A. are of May Day, when we all dressed in pastel dresses, wore white sneakers and performed English folk dances on the broad lawn below the stone steps. I can still hum the tune the violin played, and I smile to think of the "horses" prancing beside us. Those were joyous times!

Figure 6.1. The Senior Lawn & Garden Before the Chapel

Figure 6.2. May Day Dances and May Pole on the Senior Lawn

Now, if we move forward in time, we find that several women who had been students when the chapel arrived and who worked on the building and the carving, feel entirely resentful of the steeple, put on after their time, and in their view an unwelcome addition. Some find it out of character, they add, with the lines and style of the old New England meeting house. Others, there when the steeple was built by students and erected, see the steeple as adding their contribution to those that went before and as making the chapel their own. As one person from that time describes, "And then students and teachers built the steeple to put up. And it was ours. And somehow that capping of it made it ours." With a great gathering, fanfare, cranes and drama, I can imagine the steeple-capping impressing people that something significant had changed and a new group of students had helped make it happen. To assist the reader, the event is pictured on the next page (figure 6.3).

Another alumna, from as early as the class of '31, told me of her own fondness for the chapel and how, though it arrived at the Academy long after she had been a student, years later, when she was married and a neighbor of the school, she would canoe down the river to the school with her young son and both of them would have a grand time helping shingle the steeple. Another alumna, from the class of 1963, still resents the Corinthians 13 and other carvings, feeling that they were done by a select inner cadre of carvers from which she felt excluded. Yet for the carvers, their work connected them more closely to the chapel, reinforcing their sense of affiliation and ownership.

So, what is one person's delight is another's anathema. How you view the chapel and feel about its various parts or its existence as a whole has a lot to do with what state it was in or not in when you were there. Dramatic changes happening in your own time can transform something into more your own, just as it can violate the memory of how it used to be for those who went before. Whether you were in on the change or excluded, whether you were happy about the change or unhappy, colors your relationship to the outcome and your sense of how things "ought" to be. Memory and meaning intricately interweave.

Figure 6.3. The Steeple-Capping, October 12, 1961.

The Chapel, Religion & Symbols

Initial Reservations. People's sense of connection and ownership relates to the larger context in which they saw or experienced the chapel and to their own affiliations and personal predilections. Ownership is tied to identity. Where the chapel coincides with personal or symbolic identity, the sense of ownership is strong. Consider the chapel in relation to religion. Some of the longest-standing faculty members I spoke with said that they were initially apprehensive and resistant to the chapel's move because they felt it threatened the secular nature of the school. Faculty member Sylvia Mendenhall, at C.A. since the chapel's arrival, remarked,

> When I first came to the school, the chapel made me very nervous, actually, because I came a closet agnostic and I had no religious education myself. I never knew any church myself except for a funeral or a wedding or an occasion of that sort. And so this building that was off by the river I found a little bit of an embarrassment. I wasn't quite sure what was going to go on there and whether it threatened my own view of the world and the kinds of things I was teaching and that sort of thing. So I tended to keep myself a little bit more separate from it, I think, than some people.

Another early faculty member, Janet Eisendrath, expressed outright opposition, saying:

> As a matter of fact, I was opposed to putting the chapel on the campus. I did not make a point of it. I mean, one didn't. I mean, Mrs. Hall had the plan and did it. But I was opposed to that because I felt the school did not have a religious origin. And I thought this would cause trouble, or at least change the definition of the school. So I was opposed to it. But in the [end]. . . it has not . . . it has gone through periods of change.

She went on to talk about how the chapel started out with largely Episcopal trappings and service and became increasingly secular over the years.

Mrs. Hall recounted how one Catholic faculty member, Miss Bilinska, was aghast at the religious associations and use of a place not properly consecrated. She was particularly vehement on behalf of the Watts sisters at the school, among the few Catholics of that time. She felt that for them to enter the space, not consecrated, was a sin and completely unacceptable. Her vehemence, however, did nothing to dissuade Mrs. Hall.

Even Mrs. Hall expressed early concern because a chapel automatically has religious implications, yet the school was explicitly secular. She was worried that this might cause a stir and create opposition to the building's move. Nevertheless, once the chapel was at Concord, Mrs. Hall wasted no time in integrating Christian symbols, structure, and content into the chapel, from cross to choir robes, Bible to hymnals, and prayers to mini-sermons. Morning chapels, Sunday evening Vespers, and Christmas Vespers were all quickly established.

As a balance to the thoroughly Christian (and largely Episcopal) atmosphere, Mrs. Hall established a small religious library up in the balcony, with texts on a variety of the world's religions. Students were welcome to explore these at their leisure, reminding them that the intention behind bringing the chapel to C.A. was spiritual, not sectarian. As a student myself at C.A., I remember nothing about that library and I wonder how many people did know of it, as only one person has ever mentioned it to me.

Mixed Interpretations & Objections Now. Even now, despite the increasing secularization of the chapel, there is still concern about the chapel's religious implications. After all, as one alumni pointed out, it is called a "chapel." Others insist that it is entirely secular. But, as faculty member John O'Connor noted, "You can call it whatever you want but a building that has a steeple on it is not simply a meeting house." Clare Nunes says:

> I assume that originally it was a meeting house. . . called a meeting house. It didn't have a steeple. I must say that in some ways I tend to see it as a . . . Quaker meeting house. It seems to me that's the spirit to which this school has been the closest in its nondenominationalism. . . . there's a quasi-Quaker spirit, I think, or there has been here. I also tend to see it — there's a double exposure there — I tend to see it as a chapel at times. Especially when it's used as a chapel. . . John O'Connor, who's Catholic, sees it as a chapel, cannot see it except as a church. I see it as both. . . . I mean, there's no question there are some who see it as a church and experience it as a church, even though we're not supposed to. I would say this, that whatever it is, I think it's sacred to Concord Academy.

Hmm, "even though we're not supposed to" makes me wonder. I guess that is what people mean by saying that Concord is "officially" nondenominational and secular, or that

the chapel is "spiritual without being religious." Clearly here the steeple has a strong role to play as well, visually announcing the chapel as a chapel.

Besides the steeple signifying religion, concerns have been expressed about a Christian cross. Although the front altar no longer has a cross, a stone cross memorializing one of the chapel's earliest supporters, John Peabody Monk, is attached to the wall up in the chapel's balcony. Monk had stepped in to help support the chapel project during its earliest reconstruction, yet sadly died before the rebuilding was completed. His bequest and his wife's and daughter's additional gifts of funds allowed the work to go forward so that the early barn-like shell could be transformed into the completed chapel. The cross prominent- ly pictured in C.A.'s Chapel History booklet (see figure 6.4) reveals that a small altar was placed on a shelf beneath the cross, replete with candles and Bible. This is doubtless what Martha Taft, '65 referred to as the "little chapel upstairs" — a detail no one else mentioned.

Figure 6.4. Memorial Cross and Balcony Mini-Chapel

While John Peabody Monk and his role may no longer be prominent in most people's minds at C.A., controversy over the cross seems to abound. Some suggested building doors for the cross so that those who wished to view it could, but it would be hidden from unintentional view. Others favored removing it altogether. Some felt that its memorial function took precedence over its religious connotation and that removing it would be disrespectful. School Head Tom Wilcox proposed equal time and space for symbols from any other religions that students or faculty wished to have represented and he planned to offer to fund these himself, an approach reminiscent of Mrs. Hall's library.

One of the letters I received during this study was from John Monk's daughter, Mary. Gracious and encouraging in her letter, I imagine she might be saddened and hurt that her father's memorial is being discussed almost as a partisan symbol rather than as a touching personal memorial. She might take heart, however, to realize that administratively C.A. seems protective of her father's tribute and mindful of its strong associations and meaning.

Nevertheless, the heated debate accompanying questions of religion underscores how important symbols are for affiliation, connection, and a sense of ownership and identification. This applies both to individuals and the community as a whole. It seems important to people that the chapel reflect who and what Concord Academy is. For the chapel to be really "theirs," it seems to need to be free of symbols which exclude some members or which resonate with only particular segments of the school population. Thus people described religious trappings diminishing over the years as C.A. acknowledging that what those symbols had represented was "no longer who we were."

In the same vein, individual chapel-givers take pains to insure that symbols displayed during their <u>own</u> chapels reflect their own identity and affiliation. As the school started to become more diverse in the late '60s and '70s, some individuals clashed with the Christian trappings of the chapel. But it might be only in one's <u>own</u> chapel, addressing the school in one's own right, through possession of the chapel at that moment and the liberties

attending a feeling of "ownership," that a student or faculty might feel entitled to unseat the dominant symbols of the place as a whole.

Thus when we learned earlier in this paper of a Jewish student deliberately removing the cross from the altar during her chapel, it should not surprise us that the context of her own chapel afforded her that opportunity, or that she simply took the opportunity, created the opportunity, assumed the opportunity during her chapel. This is the same sense of ownership and personal entitlement that allowed that student's schoolmate to choose to read from the Bible during her chapel, even though by then the Bible was quite unexpected.

Now occasionally the chapel-giver may display a small cross on the altar or podium, inconspicuously nestled among pictures of friends and family, childhood teddies, or other mementos. It would be surprising and unlikely now to see someone intentionally place a large, dominant cross on the altar during his or her chapel, as if this would be too presumptuous and too blatant an imposition on the rest of the community, even if the individual strongly identified, personally, as a Christian. Now to presume that everyone would join together in prayer or singing hymns would be thought equally inappropriate.

Students Out of Touch with Religion. From what I gathered, many students at C.A. now seem only vaguely aware of religion, if they think of it at all. Many have no idea that the Corinthians carving is even from the Bible. One girl said, "I remember the first time I actually saw it in the Bible, it was sort of a shock. (Everyone laughs.) What is it doing in there? They stole it from us." Some have no sense of the wooden structure below the carving being an altar or of the wooden speaker's structure as a pulpit. Language people used when I interviewed them revealed this secular perspective. What some saw as an altar others called a table. One person's pews were another's benches. One's pulpit was another's podium or lectern. English teacher Clare Nunes remarked,

> I do think that this is a secular age, without question, so that a lot of values associated with sacred buildings are not recognized by students. And we're dealing with children of parents who never went — children of parents who never took them to church. So that a lot of the old allusions that we could take for granted, whether Christian, mythological, or whatever, aren't understood. So I think they're not conscious of the implications of an altar for example, or the

> fact that what's on the wall is scripture. I don't think that means a thing to them. I'm speaking in very broad terms. It doesn't mean a thing to as <u>many</u> students.
>
> My thinking is, it never was consecrated so it's not really a chapel. Still, it's a place where . . . it's a place of God. It's a place of religion. But this kind of nuance I think is lost on the average student. And a great many of them just don't think anything of sitting on the altar or tacking things on the wall. I <u>know</u> they don't. We're grateful it's the wall. You know, if you think about Catholic cathedrals in Europe, how peasants come wandering through with their donkeys and stuff. I mean it's, it's when it's really comfortable with God, in a sense. They're comfortable in the chapel. But I don't think many of them think of it in religious terms. I think a lot of them wouldn't stand in the pulpit if they did.

Others, by contrast, do associate much of the chapel with religion and would, for example, think of the front "table" as an altar. For my part, not having a cross, it didn't quite seem to be an altar, but it wasn't just a table either — hard to know what to call it. In any case, one day in the chapel with a drawing class, I was flabbergasted to see a girl sit right on top of the altar to draw. Two girls to whom I mentioned this later said that they see it as an altar. One said that she couldn't imagine sitting on it. The other said she has sat there many times. The first girl was surprised and so was I. Especially telling was the casual, nonchalant way the girl mentioned having sat on the altar many times. She spoke with a breezy, off-hand manner, as if she really didn't consider it much one way or the other. Who cares, she seemed to imply.

To treat something like the altar in terms of your own personal associations with it is, in some sense, to appropriate or "own" it. If you don't see it as an altar or understand it as an altar, treat it as a mere table and it in part becomes that for you. Your treatment may violate its identity for someone else, however. For many of those at C.A. now, though, it seems that their own experience is so far removed from religious symbols that these things do not even occur to them. They see and treat things as what they are to them, period. A sense of time and historical context and meaning are largely lost.

<u>Musical Changes: Resistance & Challenge</u>

The importance of symbolic identification and a consequent feeling of ownership, belonging, and affiliation, relate not just to static, physical symbols, but also to functions,

to what goes on in a space. One of the most dramatic examples of functional change in the chapel has been the music. First there were hymns and organ, sometimes a violin or two, later a piano, but always live music and always plenty of singing. Many of us there in that time immediately associate the chapel with singing. There was a choir as well and several people I interviewed mentioned singing in it. As noted earlier, during the late '60s recorded music crept in. Now not only is it the norm, but live music is the exception and hymns are unheard of. As noted earlier, since as early as the late 1960s some have used music in the chapel specifically to shock and outrage, a powerful vehicle for staking a claim and temporarily appropriating a space.

What does this mean for people's feelings about the chapel? Several longtime faculty members, recalling the various changes that have taken place in the chapel, say that adjusting to recorded music in the space was one of the most difficult things for them. This was especially so as it seemed to go against the grain of the sanctity of the place — particularly considering the nature of some of the hard rock and students' contemporary musical preferences. Students using music as intentionally abrasive or rebellious has exacerbated the difficulty some adults have had accommodating musical changes. The typical family dissonance that can erupt between parents and teenagers over music is readily mirrored in the chapel. Volume is as much an issue as style, where recorded music playing full blast can seem to some adults like an assault. To students playing the music, on the other hand, freedom to choose their own volume, style, and musical content underscores that this is their chapel, their time, their choice.

Talking with alumnae from the late '50s and '60s, who all sang hymns in the chapel, most are shocked that people no longer sing hymns there. Many had no idea that the chapel had been secularized. One 1964 alumna was so upset and outraged that she said,

> What? They don't sing hymns? They don't even sing at all in the chapel anymore? Well then, I'm certainly not going to promote the school! I just agreed to help promote the school in this area, but if they're not even singing in the chapel, I'm not having anything to do with them.

Alternatively, students there now are often surprised to hear that the chapel once held quasi-religious services with prayers, hymns and Biblical readings. They find it hard to imagine and would be shocked and outraged if chapels were that way now. Hearing about the hymns, one student commented, "How odd." Another said:

> I think the building itself is really magical and . . . I think it's a very spiritual place even though it's not, like, religious.
>
> Her friend added: Or maybe more so because of that. I mean, if we came in here to sing hymns, some people would get turned off. It would <u>really</u> become some horrible place where, you know, you <u>truly</u> resented being here.

Chapel Signs: Appropriation or Violation?

Another "tradition" appearing in the late '80s were chapel signs festooning the front of the space. At one point students put signs even on the Corinthians carving— promptly declared out of bounds by the school. The boldest signs are painted on huge sheets, strung from the balcony or rafters. Signs and the display of personal icons — pictures of loved ones, oneself as a child, childhood mementos from stuffed animals or toys to favorite book or flowers — all are visible means of appropriating the building. All say, this is mine for a day and all my decorations confirm it (figures 6.5 & 6.6).

Figure 6.5. Childhood Mementos on Altar below Carving

Figure 6.6. Signs Help Make the Chapel "Yours"

Yet these same vehicles of appropriation can easily be an affront to others. On alumnae weekends when displaying photographs of the chapel in use accompanied by quotes from interviews, I was not surprised to learn of alumnae offense at seeing the altar, podium, and front wall decorated with all sorts of personal items and loud signs. Even the quote from longtime faculty member, Sylvia Mendenhall, who expressed first having been upset about these and then coming to accept them, or to worry less about them, did not serve as a palliative for these alumnae. Sylvia likened students trooping in with all sorts of memorabilia to European cathedrals, saying:

> Sometimes the giver of the chapel brings his or her entire toy collection, all the dolls and bunnies and the bears, in all dimensions and sizes and states of repair and disrepair. And that used to really appall me, until I went to Jerusalem. And I went into the Christian churches, which are, of course, Eastern Orthodox, and the whole altar area was festooned with various mementos and figures and such. And I thought, you know, really, what they put in Eastern Orthodox churches in Jerusalem is not that removed from the teddy bears and family photos and special treasures. So I've stopped worrying about that. I just smile.

Throughout this study I was repeatedly treated to Sylvia Mendenhall's wry humor and playful insight. Whether meeting me in passing in a hall, dropping in as I prepared my photographs, or sitting down for a formal interview, Sylvia conveyed quiet confidence in my undertaking and readily shared her memory of telling details and wonderfully funny, endearing stories. Every time I encountered her I felt delighted as a little kid discovering a shiny shovel or truck hidden under the sand in the sandbox, as she unearthed each special story. To help you sense her quietly mischievous nature, I offer her picture (figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7. Sylvia Mendenhall, C.A. English Teacher 1956-93.

For me it was fun and instructive to see Sylvia Mendenhall's ability to absorb and enjoy change and to cast what was happening at Concord into a larger societal perspective with an impish smirk. She seems to take change comfortably in stride and to delight in its quirky, revealing twists and turns.

I also imagine that change is easier to accept when it isn't too abrupt. For many alumnae, festooning the chapel with signs and decorations as though it is a birthday party is way too far from what they knew or would ever expect. For many the signs were like a visual assault, violating what they saw as the sanctity of the chapel. Actually, although I had partly forgotten it, I was surprised by all the signs and by the casual, playful atmosphere when I first came to what I call a modern-day chapel. My field notes read:

> It's interesting how the building itself is festooned — visually appropriated — the front wall covered with homemade signs and posters. . . mostly flip chart size, across the front wall — one even hangs in front of the front (not altar) but wooden front piece with the scrollwork. Big speakers are up on the raised front and a big stereo box and guitar. Small pinkish-purple flowers adorn the lectern. Jake [the speaker] isn't in a robe or a suit — just an open-collar plaid shirt.

In my view, it was not just the signs that people objected to, but their garishness and bold insistence on being noticed. As my field notes reflect, it is as if the chapel-giver says, "Here I am, see me!" Furthermore the signs seem to take over the space and to be all the more intrusive because the space, in its own right, is so unobtrusive, so wonderfully uncluttered, so uninsistent and unpretentious. The vehemence of alumnae objections is reflected in the strength of their language. In tones usually firm, insistent, and indignant they referred to the signs as "disgusting" or "obnoxious." Some even approached me on behalf of their classmates, as if to voice their official and collective objection. They said things like, "People wanted me to tell you," or, "I think you should know."

So in this case, while visual appropriation seems to "work" for the person doing the appropriating, its very insistence can violate others and their sense that the place is theirs too. That some alumnae feel violated shows all the more how strongly they identify with the chapel as "theirs" and want to protect it as common property not to be assailed.

This whole thing makes me think of graffiti — visual appropriation and identification to one is taken as an affront by another, and sometimes it is meant to be. While chapel signs seem festive, playful, and in no way ill-intended, they stake a claim in a similar way to graffiti. Unlike graffiti, however, chapel signs are more benign, temporary, and easily put up and taken down. In addition, unlike graffiti, one person's display does not obviate another's. Each person is invited to display signs for his or her own chapel.

Actually it is not the chapel-giver who displays the signs, but the speaker's friends and supporters. But even among the supporters, anyone can put up a chapel sign. There is no sense of territorial exclusion, like "Keep your chapel sign out of here or else." But as in graffiti, there is a little friendly competition among sign-makers for the most artistic, the most noticeable, or the most provocative sign, or for the most strategic location. People mention coming early to a friend's chapel so they can find a good place for their sign. Others talk about the number of signs as a measure of popularity, something many scoff at and decry as cheapening the whole chapel experience and diverting attention from the real point of chapels. But nevertheless, people save their signs and treasure them, putting them up later in their rooms. Even faculty sometimes have a chapel sign or two of their own up in their offices.

Signs matter to people, one way or the other, whether they see them as confirming or as violating. Visual display matters. It marks ownership, entitlement, identity, and affiliation. It gets people's attention. It is hard to ignore. You can stand up in a strategic position, like a pulpit, and speak. That is one thing. But if you stand surrounded by all sorts of visual accompaniment that proclaims and affirms your existence at this moment, in this place, it says, this is no ordinary day, no ordinary time, no ordinary place. "See me, right now, right here." As senior Josh Cramer ('92) started out by saying in his chapel, "Wake up and listen. This is my time."

Ownership Through Physical Transformation and Hard Work

Making a significant impact on the building or contribution to the building, in a direct physical and visual sense is a clear way to "make it your own," whether it be through doing huge carvings or steeples or hanging up all sorts of signs. Initially the school could be seen as making the building its own by taking it down and reconstructing it, and modifying it somewhat for its own use and needs — adding a vestibule and balcony. Later carvers made their contributions, making the building more their own. Then came steeple builders, then refurbishers, and more recently new carvers. Others had vicarious claims to ownership through affiliation in time or through familial connections and generational linkages.

Disassembly & Moving

Some people mentioned how the initial disassembling and reassembling helped make the chapel Concord Academy's own. Admissions Director Mary Murray Coleman, at C.A. since 1979, says about the chapel's move to C.A.:

> I am certainly aware that it didn't grow there [at Concord]. No, it didn't start there. It's grown there. That's the wrong way to say it. [silence] . . . I actually think it's quite interesting that it moved. . . . I don't know whether it contributes more or less to its presence, because it feels like it belongs. I love the idea that it seems to be a place that has been made part of Concord through it being taken apart and put back together by faculty and students.

Not insignificant here, too, as Mrs. Hall mentioned, is that people can make something more their own by working wholeheartedly on it. To repeat a quote mentioned earlier from Mrs. Hall, "We put ourselves into that building, though. We put it back together with so much love and caring and hard work that went into it." This is making it your own, actually making it a part of you, or giving a part of yourself to it — a much more telling and palpable form of ownership and lasting bond than formally signing a piece of paper or exchanging paper money. Leaving a part of yourself is like your gift to the chapel and the

community. One alumna talking to another from the chapel's earliest time at Concord said, in relation to the carving and the chapel itself, "I'm trying to think what else we've left."

Wide-Ranging Student Involvement & Roles

Initial Movers & Pew Refurbishers. It was surprising to me to realize through time how many different people and classes had a chance to contribute something physical to the chapel, and to join in some way those who had come earlier in "making it their own." The earliest moving and reassembly, including hauling down old, worn, weather-beaten pews, sanding them down, and carefully oiling them back to life, involved students from the classes of '57 through '60. Mrs. Hall's diary from that time (1956) records:

> Sept. 30, Friday — day before yesterday. I announced the news about the chapel to the school in long assembly. Darkened the room, showed the slide, described the building, its history and location, but no word as to who owned it until I'd made quite a build-up. Much enthusiasm, no qualms at all about rebuilding it "ourselves," and every other girl in school, it seems, has a father with a truck. (McFarland, 1986, p. 142)

First Carvers and Familial Connections. Then came carving Corinthians 13 from January to June, 1957, involving two teachers, Molly Gregory and Alice McBee, and twenty students, mostly from the classes of '58 and '59, but three from '60 and one from '61. Three of these, in turn, have had children who went to Concord, and one had a nephew who went there. Connected in this familial way are students from the classes of '87, '88, '91, '92, '94, and '95. The carving connected back in time, too, as one carver's mother was a C.A. graduate from the class of 1928.

The Altar: New Carvers and Connections. Just after the Corinthians carving came work on the altar, which Mrs. Hall recounts as a response to Molly Gregory, the woodworking teacher, coming to her with a dilemma. As Mrs. Hall tells it:

> Soon after school opened in September, 1958, Molly Gregory called to say that a "terrible thing" had happened. The possibility of an accident with sharp tools immediately came to mind. "Oh no, nothing like that," she said. "It's just that all the . . . seventh grade have turned up wanting to carve. The experts have graduated. What'll I do?" (Hall, 1962, p. 21)

So the next batch of carvers was initiated and the outcome was an altar carved in 1959-60 by 10 students from the classes of 1961-64. One was the sister of Clover Nicholas (C.A. '58) who earlier had carved one of the long angels flanking Corinthians 13. This new altar project connected back in time, too, as it was carved as a memorial to Beverly Belin, who had died from illness at an early age, the young daughter of C.A. alumna Mary Cootes Belin (C.A.'30).

Steeple-Builders and Shinglers. Then came work on the steeple, which went up in the fall of 1961 and involved students from the classes of '61 through '65. When I say "involved," I mean that people from that time worked directly on the project, but also that the project happened at that time and was officially added to the chapel then. For students and faculty to feel "involved" and to consider it "their" contribution, did not mean that each one of them individually had to actually work on it physically. But having classmates and peers work on a part of the chapel and seeing the difference added during their time at Concord, was to be "involved." People not personally doing the hands-on work, still express a clear sense of "their contribution," seeing it as a contribution of their class or their time.

The steeple, too, made connections back in time, raised in honor of an alumna from the class of 1941, Patricia Lennihan Wulsin, President of the Alumnae Association when she met an untimely death — a sad shock to the community. In addition, the steeple as a memorial was extended for all alumnae who had died.

On a lighter note, I was surprised to learn of another connection between earlier times at C.A. and the steeple. At least one earlier alumna, Ruth Brooks Drinker, class of '30, occasionally paddled down the Sudbury River with her young son to join in the steeple shingling — a project and experience she still cherishes.

The Pulpit Project. Then we do not hear much about physical changes to the chapel, although the pulpit was built and intricately carved during the mid-60s. Molly Gregory planned the pulpit so that decorative strips of particular animals from fish to owls

could be carved separately to "give each one a chance." Faculty joined students in the project with Lissa Coolidge ('68) carving the fish, Susan Roosevelt ('66) doing the top rail, and Molly, herself, carving the chain of mice. Art teachers Bob Harmon and Mimi Aloian (C.A. '48 and Headmaster's wife) carved too. I can't help but smile at the nature-oriented (Dare I say pantheistic?) perspective with even dragons adorning the pulpit.

Chapel Painting, 1976. Few mentioned the pulpit, but several spoke of the mid-70s when repainting the chapel became a school-wide community project. Coming a decade later in the spring of '76, it involved students from the classes of '76 through '79 and some faculty. The project proceeded apparently without much thought to gaining official permission and seemed the perfect setting for building a sense of community spirit and involvement at the school, underscoring the feeling that the chapel was the one place in the school that people considered their own. All coming together to repaint it reaffirmed a feeling of ownership and helped reestablish the school's sense of community identity.

Carving for Chapel Dedication, 1984. Another decade passed before students were again involved in carving for the chapel. Concord Academy decided to dedicate the chapel to Mrs. Hall and to rename it the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel in her honor. So in 1984 Molly Gregory was invited back to work with the students on carvings to commemorate the occasion. Two carvings were done and hung ceremoniously, one above the entrance seen on the way into the chapel and the other just on the other side of the wall, so you can read it when passing out of the chapel.

The first simply states the name, the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel, and the second sign offers the invocation Mrs. Hall traditionally used in every chapel, "Lord grant, that as we come to Thee through the crowded ways of life, we may be still and know that Thou art God." This last carving is replete with dogs decorating its sides, as they always figured importantly in Mrs. Hall's life and were a welcome and clear presence during her tenure at Concord Academy. This new carving for the chapel did several things: it reestablished the sense of the chapel's connection to Mrs. Hall; it offered new students the opportunity to

"own" the building more through contributing something visible and lasting to it; and it connected students to the traditions and people who had come before and had been so pivotal — earlier carvers like themselves, as well as Mrs. Hall and Molly Gregory, herself.

Tom Wilcox's Sensitivity to Ownership

Tom Wilcox, who came to head up the school in 1981 and is still there, talked about the chapel and the question of ownership. He described "the sense that [the chapel] more than any other building on campus is owned by the community . . . builds a very real sense of who we are." He went on to talk about dedicating the chapel to Mrs. Hall, saying,

> We dedicated it in Mrs. Hall's name, which some people had a problem with, because they thought it's everybody's chapel, not just hers. Our theory was that she was the one who found it. She was the one who built it. She was the one who, more than any other individual, inscribed something on the face of this school. And to name anything less in her honor would be giving a great person short shrift. When we did dedicate it in her honor, we reprinted that book, the story of the chapel.

When I asked him to elaborate on the concern that it was everybody's chapel, he responded:

> It was one or two people. There was no all school meeting — no protest. Unlike we usually have them here (both laugh). There was not a sit-in. I was not hung in effigy. No, in fact there was, among a lot of alumnae, great delight in that. I was as excited about that in terms of giving the alumnae of the fifties and early sixties a sense of ownership of the school, cause there wasn't anything redone. . . . Seeing that building, associated with your time and their time, remembered permanently seemed to be very important.

In fact, so strongly has Tom Wilcox been seen as trying to connect the school with its past and its past with its present, that he has been referred to playfully as "taking one step forward and two steps backward" (McFarland, 1986).

So, there is a whole backlog of things that have been done around the chapel to include people and to cement their sense of relationship and ownership. Tom Wilcox, as he mentions above, even looks for ways to strengthen people's affiliation with the chapel to help create a sense of ownership of the school as a <u>whole</u>.

Ownership Through Accessibility

Another powerful affirmation of community ownership of the chapel is represented by the fact that it is never locked. People say the chapel was never locked in New Hampshire either. Anyone can come into the chapel anytime. Alumna Martha Taft's own chapel talk in 1965 reflected this beautifully, when she described what the chapel meant to her.

> What I enjoy is the fact that the doors are always open and one can come in at any time, for any reason. On weekends or after school, anyone can come in and read or look around, or just sit and think. It doesn't matter what you are wearing or what kind of mood you are in. The chapel is a place for anything at any time: you can walk up and inspect the altar or the organ, you can go upstairs to the little chapel in the balcony, or you can think about what you would like to say when it is your turn to give a chapel. The chapel is both a place for the school as a whole and a place for each individual in the school to come into whenever she wants.

Several people were careful to mention to me that the chapel is never locked, day or night, and some spoke of going there quietly, themselves, for solitude and sometimes for refuge and solace. For the chapel not to be locked says this is here for you if you want. Come in if you want. This is yours as much as anybody's. Locks, on the other hand, say this is mine, not yours. Keep out.

C.A. Admissions Director Mary Murray Coleman told me about someone from the larger Concord community who took this welcoming, unlocked building to heart. In Mary Murray's words:

> I happen to know, for instance, that somebody that I pass in the morning, walking, several years ago she said to me, "Is it all right if I go into the chapel early in the morning?" And I said, "Like what time?" cause it's never locked. And she said, "Well, I usually end up there at about 6:15 as I'm walking by. And I said, "I can see no reason why you shouldn't go in." And she said, "I just find it the most extraordinarily quieting place, away from the world and away from the rush and bother of my life. It's an oasis for me."

Never locked, always available. My chapel, your chapel, our chapel, anyone's chapel who wants it to be theirs. You don't need permission to go in, or an appointment, or a key.

Despite no locks, though, ownership in relation to access and strategic visibility is asserted in part by the Chapel Committee. Charged with overseeing, organization, and scheduling of the chapel, the Chapel Committee consists of several students and two faculty members. Besides all their behind-the-scenes work, the Chapel Committee members hold open the chapel doors each morning and greet those who enter. They offer an official welcome and a visible presence that confirms their position vis-a-vis the chapel. And they help set the tone for the gathering. Students and faculty don't just file silently and anonymously into the chapel. Instead, they are greeted by an eager cluster of students. Hugs, handshakes, and brief smiles or words of acknowledgment welcome people to come in and to be present in the chapel. A picture of one morning with greeters welcoming those coming into the chapel may help convey the feeling (see figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8. Morning Chapel Greeters

Ownership Through Giving Chapels

In addition, ownership is powerfully created by the strength of what happens in the chapel and how much sense of personal connection, personal power, and personal identification people associate with it. Now the experience of "giving" a chapel, as it has evolved into a central rite of passage for students, creates an indelible sense of ownership for them. Alumna, Marian Ferguson, CA '63, commented:

> I think in terms of a center, its function in terms of everybody giving a chapel and that device of making it belong to you because you had participated in the life of the building, that way was a very, very important thing that the school chose to do. I mean, they chose to get us all to do chapels for lots of reasons, but I think ownership was one of the by-products of that. I mean, if you'd gotten up there and spoken and shared that experience with people who have done it your year and who've done it years past and who will do it in years future, that's a real vehicle to make you own it . . . in the broadest sense. . . . It's like sinking a big tap root into a place.

English teacher, Sylvia Mendenhall, at C.A. since 1956, talks about student ownership, especially now through giving senior chapels. She says:

> They consider it a kind of . . . their fifteen minutes . . . to express themselves before the whole community, to present themselves before the whole community. Who am I? . . . For a while everybody, the past couple of years, would start out saying [i.e.], "My name is Sylvia Mendenhall and this is my chapel." This was the appropriate way to start. . . . There is a great sense that the kids have of this is my chapel, in the sense of my presentation, and that this is a place in the school where you are free to tell the rest of the community whatever you think is most clearly you and most important.

So giving a chapel cements your ownership of it for all time by virtue of participating in this powerful ritual. At the same time, the very day of your own chapel makes the chapel, as several have said, "yours for the day." As some remarked, there is a sense that while the chapel belongs to everyone, special "ownership" of it rotates throughout the community with the rotation of chapel-givers from one day to the next — "community property." As my field notes mention related to giving a chapel, "There is a feeling of possession, as if, for these few minutes, the chapel is mine."

Ownership and License

Ownership Implies Entitlement

Along with that sense of ownership and personal property, comes a feeling of permission. This is my fifteen minutes, my chapel, I can do what I like. I am given license, the feeling goes. And at the same time comes the thought, how much license? Typical of adolescence, there is a frequent desire, even a need, to test the limits, push the boundaries. If it is really my time, why can't I do whatever I want? They say I can, so here goes.

Pushing the Limits. As the faculty and administrators explain it, four letter words suddenly can abound. A student who might otherwise appear entirely mild-mannered and carefully polite, may use his chapel to let invectives fly, or to simply sprinkle words chosen for their offensiveness (particularly to adults) like colorful garnish on his (and more rarely her) chapel talk. I say "his" here because from my own limited observation the boys seem much more inclined to sprinkle obscenities in their chapels than the girls. But, then, my sample is by no means inclusive, so this may be quite incidental and particular only to my own experience.

People's chapels, however, are often sites for testing and for contestation. One particularly memorable chapel in this vein was described by Ron Richardson, a longtime French teacher at the school. He remarked how offensiveness was much more a mark of the seventies than now, although occasionally now there will be a chapel apparently designed to offend, to shock, or to push the limits and keep pushing, like someone who pushes your doorbell and refuses to let up. He remembered one particularly offensive chapel recently, yet also said that chapels to shock and offend were on the wane, with:

> Very few now. I think we had one and it was typical. We had a slew of, what do you call them, educational consultants — those people who tell you where to send children to school — were visiting. And you can imagine what some of them were like. And Tom [Wilcox, the headmaster] had them here. And one boy looked — was something right out of 1973. He had an old stuffed chair.

He put it on the platform and said "Well. . ." and a ssssstring of oaths and said, "I wanted to do this. I've always wanted to do this. "

Oh dear, you know, you're going to regret this so bitterly within hours. And then every time there's a reunion you come back to — it's said, you were the one who gave the dreadful chapel.

And here were these education [consultants]. Tom swept them out. "Oh," he said, "I've made a mistake. We have to meet at another building." Because he knew as soon as the boy opened his mouth. And it fell — more than fell flat. It was just an absolute disaster. He was going to read some, I don't know, poetry of some sort . . . all way out stuff, and couldn't find it. It was just appalling. And I thought, 15 years ago we suffered through a lot of those.

Is Chapel a Right or a Privilege?

Individual Freedom vs. Community Responsibility. So, along with ownership comes the issue of license and bound up in this is the question of the relationship between individual freedom and community responsibility, or consideration for community values, feelings, and mores.

Whose Chapel Is It? This raises the question of the relationship between individual ownership and license in the chapel and community ownership and control, if you will, or sanction versus limits. Clare Nunes, an English teacher at C.A. for over a decade (making her a relative newcomer, she notes) and one of the faculty members co-chairing the Chapel Committee, sees the issue of ownership and license emerging in particular now. As she describes it:

There was a controversial chapel early in the fall and there've been a couple of others in which four letter words have been used. The whole issue of whose. . . whose chapel is it I think is maybe on the horizon. I don't know where this dialogue will end. I think it may be part of a much larger dialogue within the school community. . . .

But, I think . . . I've always assumed that I had gotten the right idea on this . . . but I really have never tested it . . . that chapel was what you made of it . . . that basically the student was free to accept responsibility, as well as enjoy freedom of expression. And that you stood or fell by what you said, or that, at any rate, you would accept the consequences.

And it has been used for almost every conceivable purpose, since I've been here, I would say. Sometimes it's a blistering confession. And sometimes it's a blistering accusation. More often it's autobiographical, or possibly sometimes performance. . . . While none of us may like what we hear, we are bound to

respect it. But we are equally free to dissent, or even to disapprove. But it does not tend to be expressed — not a public disapproval, or certainly not a concerted disapproval.

Later she remarks:

> One faculty member said to the seniors this year that to give a chapel is a privilege. And I think, if you would ask a senior — the average senior — how he would term it, he would say "a right," rather than a privilege.

For some, the sense of having a right to give a chapel includes the sense of a right to the chapel and to do or say what you will in the chapel when it is your turn. More than just having a turn, many people express the sense of the chapel as "theirs for the day." For others concern and consideration of the larger community and larger "ownership" of the chapel holds sway.

Trying to Define Limits. Bill Bailey, a longtime history teacher at the school, also served as the senior class advisor during my study, so it fell on his shoulders to address issues particularly relevant for the seniors. How much license was allowable in the chapel was a prime concern.

> We don't really try to persuade them to go in specific directions. I think we actually concentrate more on just what is inappropriate, in terms of demeaning others, use of foul language, which they resent enormously, some of them, from me. They say, "This is my time." And I say, "No, it's not." It's your time, but with limits, because it's a privilege. And you want it, but you don't have any privilege without accompanying responsibility. And you need to be sensitive to other people. And just because you and your peers are unconcerned about obscene language, doesn't mean that the rest of us aren't offended. (softly) And you don't have a right to offend me. And then they like, "Yes, we do." So . . .

I ask if they take his words to heart.

> He says: It depends. . . . It varies. I'd say, out of a class of about ninety, a couple, five of them will use obscene language anyway. Others will use it in context . . . in a quote or something that they've read or that they've heard. And I never have a problem with that. Never. It's just if they're here and say, you know, "Fuck Concord Academy," . . . that's the kind of license I find intolerable. Now, not all my colleagues agree with me. Most of them do, but certainly not all of them. There are others who would say, "Absolutely, it's their time." I don't. I don't believe that for a minute.

Not until I am talking with students does the term "censorship" come up. At one point I meet with an entire art class which has been drawing the chapel. The group ranges

from first year students through to seniors, about ten or twelve people. Again, I am basically interested in what the chapel means to them. The issue of censorship is brought up immediately. Some in the class think that people should have no constraints at all on what they say in their chapels. This seems, at first, the prevailing view. One sophomore girl, however, suggests that maybe some things shouldn't be allowed because they might violate the space. She ties this particularly to the fact that memorial services and other very meaningful, personally important things have happened in the chapel to which individual people are terribly sensitive. So, she calmly notes, some of these individuals might feel violated by offensive things happening there. She speaks softly, but strongly, with conviction and power on thinking about and respecting other people and how they might feel about it. Her saying this seems to allow others to say, well, of course there are limits.

Some say there are rules and you need your advisor's approval for your chapel talk. Others say, no, not really, but there is an admonishment not to swear, at least not without considering the consequences. One boy speaks up who seems particularly thoughtful and interesting, a sophomore, his red hair a striking mass of dreadlocks. He says that you are not supposed to criticize the school in a chapel because, "We're perfect. There's nothing wrong with us here at this school," His tone has a biting edge, philosophic and derisive. He mentions the word, "whitewash." He is adamant that it is your fifteen minutes and you've taken all this time (three or four years usually, he notes) thinking about what you want to say, so you should be able to say whatever you want.

Three other boys I talked with, two seniors, my own son Noah, his best friend Amani Willett, and a junior who was with them mentioned controversial chapels that sometimes even resulted in faculty meetings or class meetings with students. When I asked what kind these were, Noah said they were "over chapels that were, like, 'fuck the administration.'" They all agreed that these simply angered the administration, except occasionally when the student was able to be eloquent and forceful, without being insulting or offensive. They imagined that in these few cases, the administration might actually listen. The other

offensive, problematic chapel they mention is one where the student just made fun of everyone he didn't like. They had class meetings about that chapel, and apparently at the time they had somewhat resented the meetings and the administration's insistence on meeting. Yet on reflection now, sometime later, they feel somewhat different. Here is a segment of that conversation.

> Amani: It's weird, when I think back on it now, cause that's not what I think a chapel's all about. In a way, now, looking back, I can sort of see why the administration would be so upset. Because it's such a special thing that you don't want to take a chance of breaking that magic, you know, by offending someone.
>
> Noah: Yeah, what's the point of making fun of someone in your chapel, you know? I mean, what does that do for you or anyone else?
>
> Me: Yeah, like it breaks that trust.
>
> Noah: Totally.
>
> Amani: Yeah.

Seniors Enforce Their Own Norms

After talking with several students, I realized that the students, particularly the seniors, have their own norms that they diligently enforce in the chapel and about chapels. While the chapel may belong to everyone, there is the prevailing sentiment that it belongs to the seniors even more. So while students as a whole have a definite sense of owning the chapel, seniors are adamant about it and their strong sense of entitlement to enforce norms reflects that.

A central norm for students is people not criticizing each other, not judging each other's chapels, but taking them for what they are, accepting what they wish from each chapel, and leaving it at that. One girl describes this about her own chapel, in response to her friend saying, "It's very easy to be critical of other people's chapels." She says,

> I think the thing that really drove me crazy the day of my chapel, which is why I didn't even stay around, was people were coming up to me and like, not even saying things directly to me, but just sort of looking at me, you know, and that was awful. . . . Also because people would talk and I would walk by them and they get quiet all of a sudden, and you're like, "Oh, my God, they're talking

about my chapel." _____ [a faculty member] came up to me and he was like, "Well, I mean, some would take that as a tragedy chapel, but it obviously wasn't because . . ." And I was, like, don't judge me. Don't judge my chapel and don't judge me to my face. Don't do it. Just don't do it.

I asked one senior, Sharon Bergman, whether there was a feeling of worry that people were going to be judged in their chapels. She replied:

> No, no, there really isn't at all. I mean, there have been some chapels that have rocked the school (laughs), not to mention my life. But mostly no. Mostly people . . . take it for what it is. And they listen to what somebody has to say . . . and they use it if they can and they don't if they can't. And also seniors are very protective about, of their senior chapels.

She went on to recall when she was a sophomore and a particular senior girl gave a really emotional chapel. A third student, a sophomore at the time, started saying something critical about the chapel right after it. Two seniors immediately accosted the sophomore saying, "We will not tolerate that. That person got up in front of the whole school and said what was honest and you have absolutely no right to say a thing about it." Sharon went on to note that the affronting student did not return after sophomore year, for a whole host of reasons. She finished the story with what was for her the bottom line and final point, "The seniors said, 'No.'"

Sharon went on to talk about the strong sanctions against not listening in chapel, or against blatantly doing something other than listening during chapel. She pinpointed one sophomore who used to sit up in the sophomore balcony with his headphones on. She still sighs, as if disheartened and disgusted about him. She recounts how the other sophomores in his section talked to him repeatedly. Seniors and faculty talked to him, and nothing seemed to work. Now at least he is down in the junior section and has stopped wearing headphones. The next year I ask several of his fellow seniors about him and about his chapel and they dismiss him, almost with the wave of a hand.

Chapels are so central and personal that to blatantly ignore other people's chapels is considered a serious breach indeed. So seriously is this taken that people offensively inconsiderate of others' chapels are given very short shrift indeed. They are almost dismissed as people in much the same way that they demonstrate disregard for others by

failing to show consideration for people and their chapels. When these inconsiderate few give chapels themselves, they may expect little or nothing by way of supportive signs, friends gathering round before or after the talk, or the rapt attention people are so used to giving and are usually so generous with in the chapel.

So, seniors, in particular, apparently feel no compunction about insisting on these norms that, for them, help guarantee the sanctity of senior chapels. So, rather than the building, or space, or religious associations being violated, their focus is respect for the chapel speaker and for the right to speak and not be violated. Measures of that respect, for them, include the right to be fully listened to, for others to fully "attend" to each others' chapels, and the right not to be judged or personally questioned later about their own chapels. For many it includes the right to say whatever they want in their own chapels, at the same time as some recognize that offensive behavior or language are inappropriate both institutionally and interpersonally.

From what I can gather, students have much more respect for the interpersonal constraints than for the institutional ones. They respond to people speaking from the heart about what the chapel means to them. So personal testimony about how some actions in chapel can be taken as personal affronts is something that many students can hear and respond to.

Faculty Affect Norms Through Heart

One faculty member, Ron Richardson, a French teacher at Concord since 1966, was asked recently to speak to the students about what was deemed appropriate and inappropriate in the chapel. Telling me about this his manner is warm and endearing. He cocks his head, remembering. His tone, his expressions, his whole being, really let you know how very much he cares about the people he has known at Concord Academy, especially the students. He tells it this way:

> I spent a sleepless night early in the fall because they wanted me to stand up and say something about. . . these signs that were going up. And the language, of

course, now is very rough . . . it's very, very rough talk. And I thought, Gee, that's just not appropriate for this building. So what I did, in a minute and a half, because I know the longer the announcement, the less effective it is. I told them what the chapel meant to me. And I think for the first time in my life, I had to come to terms with what it meant to me. . . .

And having heard extraordinary statements from colleagues, but mostly students, because some ninety percent of the Seniors opt to give a chapel. . . So I told the children, very, very briefly with maybe one line, what I'd heard in the chapel. I've been to weddings. I've been to a wedding of a Concord Academy boy and a Concord Academy girl. And I said, "if your parents tell you you're going through a phase, it may be lifelong."

Uh, funerals. There was a boy here who — very, very sweet boy, day boy — went off to the University of Colorado and died in a . . . sort of freak accident. He had pneumonia and was being taken from the infirmary of the school to the hospital in Denver. And he choked to death in the emergency wagon, which never should have happened. This was December of his freshman year.

And his parents came. It was just devastating. Somebody didn't do what he should have done. There's no way that boy should have died like that. But he did. And his parents — his sisters were here still as students — and his parents said, "May we have the funeral in the chapel?" And we had had funerals of, you know, older people that were somehow connected with it. And we said, "Yes."

All but six members of his class from Concord came to the funeral. And it was a beautiful day in December — very warm, a false spring. You know, we had a stretch of very warm weather for this time of year, and even the trees had budded. But you knew that they would never flower. And we had telegrams. There was one student who was in Africa. Another one was in London. And they said they couldn't get back. But all but six of his class, and his parents, and a very formal service, but with personal statements afterwards. And the casket closed was there.

And we have had tributes to those who've died, two or three members of the community who've died of AIDS a couple of years ago. And with all of that, I said I just felt that very rough language wasn't appropriate.

Beyond the Head, Straight to the Heart for Me, Too

I Am Taken Aback

Writing this now makes me stop and take stock. This whole project has been that way, again and again. Time after time I would sit down to meet with people, asking about the chapel, and time and again I was overcome how warmly and intimately they responded. People went easily and naturally past the facts to what things really meant to them, for

them. It was not what I expected, not what I had thought this sort of research was all about.

I had thought of it as heady, bookish to some extent, thoughtful, intriguing, but not nearly so heartfelt, personal, or intimate. I was taken aback. I thought, what do I do now? How do I deal with this? How do I take what is so much a matter of the heart and deal with it through the head, as dissertations seem to ask one to do? How do I put all this into words without losing its very essence, its heartbeat? Won't the introduction of mere rationality set it apart, treat it like an object to some extent — deaden it, if you will? The form itself seems to partly constrain the content.

An Antidote to Distance

For me one antidote to this distancing, this tendency to lose the very heart of the matter, is to share something of people's own stories, in their own words and at some length, as they shared them with me. I am hoping this will help you, the reader, feel what this dissertation work has been like and feel the power and intimacy of people's connections to the chapel. I want you to think, but also to feel.

I think of Carolyn Heilbrun's book here, Writing a Woman's Life (1988) and I want to avoid the trap she finds in writing about other people's lives of "too readily conforming to the male model of distance and apparent disinterest" (p. 68). There was nothing distant about this dissertation. The people I met and spoke with were not distant, removed, or simply rational and academic. Almost without exception, they spoke from the heart and with the heart. From the outset my heart was caught up too. I want to keep it that way. One might see this as a dilemma in an academic setting, conceiving, as one might, of a dissertation as largely academic. Or one might ask, how can this undertaking be more full, more inclusive, more apt for what I have been engaged in and for what the chapel is and has been to people?

Inventing New Ways of Telling & Sharing

I am reminded again of Carolyn Heilbrun, who posits that women and biographies or autobiographies of women have been constrained, misconstrued, and misrepresented by following forms, language, and limits set by men. Quoting Nancy Miller, Heilbrun refers to "the patriarchal gaze, which surveys, judges, regulates" (Miller, in Heilbrun, 1988, p. 83). One could say the same of the academy, itself an institution honoring what we think of as stereotypically male presumptions of objectivity, rationality, and analysis. Heilbrun writes, further that:

> Women must turn to one another for stories; they must share the stories of their lives and their hopes and their unacceptable fantasies. . .
>
> We must stop reinscribing male words and rewrite our ideas about what Nancy Miller calls a female impulse to power. . . . We know we are without a text, and must discover one. . .
>
> I do not believe that new stories will find their way into texts if they do not begin in oral exchanges among women in groups hearing and talking to one another. As long as women are isolated one from the other, not allowed to offer other women the most personal accounts of their lives, they will not be part of any narrative of their own. (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 44-46)

To me, that is part of what this dissertation is about. Not that I presume to offer a new language. But I do think that the chapel itself is about people hearing each other's stories and telling their own stories, in their own ways, and continually reinventing those ways. It is about rediscovering, through the sharing of stories, who we are— for women, and also for men — for girls and boys becoming women and men. As Headmaster Tom Wilcox describes it:

> The chapel is the defining element of Concord Academy. The sense that we're not a cookie-cutter, molding school where I became who I am because they made me into that, we're the kind of school that allowed me to evolve into what I want to be, is certainly defined by our chapels, which are not ritualistic services, but a place where students define themselves, either by saying good-bye to their adolescence or saying hello to their adulthood. . . . The stories told in the first service of putting up the spire, etc. reveal the sense that it, more than any other building at Concord, is owned by the community. Its presence continues to build a very real sense of who we are.

Keeping This Project "Real"

For me the task is partly how to keep the project real and still use these words on this paper to help convey that reality without killing it. And the project became, for me, at each step more and more real. I hope that offering here even brief segments of peoples' stories may begin to bring that home.

When I tried to convey to C.A. what the project has been and meant, at first I used photographs and quotes. Carefully and collectively selected photographs of the chapel were blown up and juxtaposed with excerpts from interviews. The resulting exhibit captured some of the evocative quality of the project and the chapel and gave at least a hint of how this has been a weaving of stories, a listening to and telling of stories, of different perspectives and insights — personal, intimate, and moving.

Coming to Know Each Other

In large part the chapel has evolved into a vehicle through which to come to know each other and ourselves, both individually and collectively. "Knowing" not in the sense that I "know" your name or "know" all the capitals of the fifty states. But more in the sense offered in the last part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the last few lines not included in the great Corinthians 13 carving in the chapel:

> For now we see through a glass, darkly;
> but then, face to face; now I know in part;
> but then shall I know even as also I am known.

What's Love Got To Do with It?

For this entire project and the questions I am struggling with to take this and mold it into a dissertation, the Corinthians 13 quote carved in the chapel is entirely fitting. Ironically the Concord carving begins, "Though I speak with the tongues of men." For the full text of the carving, see page 78.

Here we are in a school, Concord Academy. A school — something most of us associate with knowledge, above all. Yet we come into the chapel and are greeted with this magnificent carving that says, in part, "Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing." Nothing. School — a place where we think of learning to articulate our ideas, to put our thoughts into words, to wrestle with words and debate one another and win arguments. Yet, this carving's first message to us is, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, we who have come, through the academy, to think so highly of ourselves, to prize each others' thoughts and words so highly.

This carving turns the tables on us. It is not knowledge or speaking we should prize, it exhorts us, but love. Love. And this is not just hypothetical love, but love writ large, love carved, time and again, in a huge carving, in wood, by students just like me, girls like me — women not expected to carve wood or to build buildings or to put their words where everyone can see them from a distance and for a long time to come. Figure 6.9 below shows a section of the carving close up.

Figure 6.9. 1st Corinthians 13 Carving Close Up

I remember being a student at Concord Academy and looking up at this carving and thinking , "Love? What's love got to do with it? I thought this was a school. I thought schools were about learning and knowledge and ideas, not about love," just like I thought dissertations were about ideas and thinking and reading and writing, not about intimacy, not about heart. But this is Concord Academy. This is the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel, the Concord Academy Chapel, the students', the community's, my chapel, your chapel, everybody's chapel — both individual and collective, both thoughtful and reflective, and highly emotional. Who could doubt that taken as a whole, this is all about another way of knowing, another way of being, a whole transformed paradigm of what education and meaning and individuality and community are all about, or could be all about?

CHAPTER 7

THE CHAPEL CONNECTS WITH WOMEN'S WAYS

"Men have no need to define themselves by their gender." — Kathleen Weiler, 1988

Chapter Overview and Introduction

Close, personal, intimate — these all come to mind when thinking about the chapel. Connected and connecting make me think of the chapel too, rather than disconnected; passionate rather than dispassionate; caring rather than indifferent. Some see these characteristics as relating more to women than to men and posit that men and women have fundamentally different ways of approaching, interpreting, and experiencing the world. Considerable work has emerged during the last two decades to understand and describe these differences. Furthermore, some have explicitly explored not just how women are in relation to men and to their difference from men, but how women are in their own right.

This chapter will explore how the chapel seems particularly compatible with what some call "women's ways of knowing" (Belenky et al., 1986). In the chapter I describe work in this area by pivotal psychologists and educators and explore how their ideas are demonstrated through the chapel. Topics discussed include: finding and asserting one's own voice and identity; fear of failure; learning by connecting and personal experience; challenging authority; taking risks; and participating passionately. I go beyond a focus on individual growth and development to apply these ideas to the chapel and C.A. as a caring, connected community. Questions are raised about the tension and balance between individuality and community — a recurring theme in the chapel. As a whole this area of inquiry seems to me to throw light on the dynamics at work in the chapel, unveiling some

of what makes it work as it does, for women and men, girls and boys, and C.A. as an entire community.

Background: Psychology & Feminism

How do women think and feel and act in the world? How do they come to understand themselves and the world around them? What underlying beliefs and fundamental assumptions lie behind women's approaches? Jean Baker Miller posed these questions in her landmark Toward a New Psychology of Women (1976). Carol Gilligan followed with In a Different Voice: Psychological theory and women's development (1982). Both explored how women are as they live their lives, rather than as confirming or denying prevailing psychological theories. Both authors were impelled to consider women in their own right by the paucity of psychological theories appropriate to women. Gilligan and Miller started empirically, embedded in the context of real women and what they had to say. Carol Gilligan (1982) writes:

> My interest lies in the interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise, in the way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives. (p. 2)

Others built on these strong beginnings, at each step more thoroughly delineating what was going on for women. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule collaborated to put together Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of self, voice, and mind (1986), where they elaborated on women as constructed and connected, rather than separate, knowers. Since then work in this area has proliferated. The recent Women's Growth in Connection (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) pulls together pivotal writings by several people active at Wellesley College's Stone Center, which has been prominent in the field. These papers go further and deeper into the theme of women and connected knowing, exploring a variety of contexts and tackling issues that include women and power. While most of this work focuses on adult or young adult women,

Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer's Making Connections (1989) deals explicitly with teenage girls. These efforts and others like them have built on each other over the last two decades. All run counter to the predominant, male-derived view that human psychological growth and development is principally about separation and individuation.

Parallel and sympathetic with these developments in psychology, pivotal work in education has focused on women in relation to voice, identity, visibility, and power. Some especially cogent work from a feminist perspective on education includes Kathleen Weiler's Women Teaching for Change: Gender, class, and power (1988) and The Education Feminism Reader edited by Lynda Stone (1994). The latter reprints some of the most compelling articles to have appeared since the late 1970s, by a wide range of prominent feminist educators. A concern with women as oppressed and often marginalized has also been elaborated in a wealth of feminist writings outside of education. Work by some Black authors has been especially provocative, has increasingly politicized the discussion, and has overtly intended a sociopolitical impact. I find the work of bel hooks (1984, 1990) and Patricia Hill Collins (1991) particularly insightful and compelling.

To me this work on women and women's perspectives and lives helps in unraveling what the chapel is about. To set the connections, I outline briefly how some of these authors see women as different from men. While my characterization is undoubtedly overly simplistic, and admittedly steeped in stereotypes, it may, nevertheless, prove helpful. Drawing from a variety of authors, we could make associations in terms of what women and men are thought to seek and value, and how they seem to be in the world, as outlined in Table 1 on the next page.

This table could be used to contrast a traditional, hierarchical, logical, positivist paradigm with an interpretive, qualitative world view. Applied to education, the result is two radically different approaches to: what knowledge is; what counts as knowledge and as valid or legitimate; who speaks; who listens; what is allowable subject matter (who's

in/who's out); what modes of understanding and discourse are permissible or preferred; and who decides any of this.

While Table 1 contrasts men to women, the traits or approaches listed are not exclusive to either men or women. While they may be traditional and stereotypical for women versus men, women can and do embrace and display some of the traits often considered male and vice-versa. In my view Concord Academy and the chapel, in particular, are embedded in and exemplary of what Belenky et al. call "women's ways of knowing," especially what they call constructed and connected knowing. The chapel encourages and helps develop connected knowing for male and female alike in the C.A. community.

Table 1. Contrasting Ways of Being & Knowing

WOMEN	MEN
Intimacy	Distance & separation
Equality, cooperation	Authority & mastery over
Connected, in relationship	Separate, independent
Subjective	Objective
Embedded understanding	Disconnected "facts"
Personal, particular, concrete	Abstract, impersonal
Narrative, dialogue, conversation	Logical, scientific argument
Embodied, contextual	Disembodied, generic
Empathetic	Impersonal, distant
Accepting, belief in other	Judgmental, doubts other
Passionate, emotional	Dispassionate, rational
Feelings and beliefs primary	Feelings downplayed & distrusted
Marginalized & excluded from power	Dominant & controlling
Qualitative	Quantitative

The Chapel & Connected Knowing

The chapel reflects women's ways at every turn. Paramount in the chapel are understanding, intimacy, empathy, and suspending judgment. Feelings and personal experience are highly honored — even treated as sacrosanct. Right and wrong are not at issue, but, rather, connecting with and understanding each other are central. Personal, intimate stories connect people in a heartfelt, close, and powerful way. Feelings of trust and safety pervade. Countless people I spoke with mentioned these explicitly.

> What I see now that is absolutely wonderful about the school is there's no risk at all, and there's no judgment. — Bill Bailey, History Teacher

> I guess I felt like it was sort of a safe place. If you'd get up and say things and it wouldn't be held against you. — Aden Kumler, Senior '92

> There's no question that it's a moment to savor a particular personality. A lot of affection comes to the fore. — Clare Nunes, English Teacher

> Chapels vary tremendously. (spoken softly) What some kids will reveal in those chapels is absolutely astonishing. And it says a great deal about the community, the safety they feel in this bunch of people. I mean, no way would I reveal myself to three hundred people at once the way some of those kids have. But to stand up there and talk about abuse of various kinds in their families and all sorts of other traumatic experiences that they've been through and in some cases haven't talked about to anybody ever, until they get up there in front of three hundred people is astonishing. — Katy Rea Schmitt, Science Teacher

> It feels like the building will not reveal anything that goes on in there. You know what I mean? So you can go in there, you want to talk to someone, whatever, and it feels sacred and it will be kept secret in that building.
> —Amani Willett, Senior '93

In the chapel, as in connected knowing, understanding is a goal worked at through really listening and empathizing, through stepping into the other person's shoes.

> Connected knowing builds on the subjectivists' conviction that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than the pronouncements of authorities. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 112)

Because the concern is not with someone else's truth or someone else's abstract, disembodied knowledge, but, rather, with each person's own unique experience and perspective, judgment is easily suspended. As Belenky et al. note:

> . . . while women frequently do experience doubting as a game, believing feels real to them, perhaps because it is founded upon genuine care and because it promises to reveal the kind of truth they value — truth that is personal and particular and grounded in firsthand experience. (p. 113)
>
> This trustfulness builds on the subjectivist notion that because all opinions come from experience and you cannot call anyone's experience wrong, you cannot call the opinion wrong. Connected knowers do not measure other people's words by some impersonal standard. Their purpose is not to judge, but to understand. (p. 116)

Personal Stories

Young People Challenge Authority & Assert Identity. This focus on personal stories, direct experience, empathy, connection, and understanding that is so paramount in the chapel is especially compatible with young people. The stance challenges authority. It says, each of us knows and experiences in our own way, for our own reasons, and how each of us understands our own reality has validity simply because it is our own perspective, our own story, our own life. This is a message that young people can readily embrace as they are so often in the throes of searching to define their own experience and reality as distinct from their parents or from the dominant authorities and culture around them. Feeling excluded or alienated from the dominant society at times, and at other times simply wishing to distinguish themselves from whatever is the norm, personal, episodic knowing that recognizes and validates their own experience, their own ideas, their own perspective is especially fitting for young people searching for and seeking to claim their own identity.

At the fore are questions about how one is special, particular, and individual. At the same time young people are also enmeshed in questions about how they fit in with their peers, society, and the larger world. Who are they, in relation to themselves and to others? How are they separate and how are they connected? How are they different and yet the same? Erickson, a psychologist associated with adolescent development, finds that "the task at this stage is to forge a coherent sense of self, to verify an identity that can

span the discontinuity of puberty and make possible the adult capacity to love and work" (Erickson, in Gilligan, 1982, p. 11).

Thinking about how women fit into the picture, Carol Gilligan and others have noted that the typical understanding of a developing adolescent's transition to adulthood is far more apt for males than for females. Gilligan finds the usual benchmarks toward adulthood of individuation, separation, and increased capacity to act on the world independently and decisively to be characteristics not only more comfortably male than female, but often not considered even desirable by females. The traditional definitions of growth, development, and adulthood are conceived almost entirely from a male perspective. Women's ways of knowing, women's voices, women's experience are left out, or, equally typically, found lacking. The consequence has been that prevailing views of adulthood show only part of the picture. Gilligan says the following about studies of sex-role stereotypes:

> The repeated findings of these studies is that the qualities deemed necessary for adulthood — the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and responsible action — are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self. The stereotypes suggest a splitting of love and work that relegates expressive capacities to women while placing instrumental abilities in the masculine domain. Yet looked at from a different perspective, these stereotypes reflect a conception of adulthood that is itself out of balance, favoring the separateness of the individual self over connection to others, and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care. (1982, p. 17)

If your story has been left out, your way of most comfortably seeing and being in the world ignored or denigrated, a powerful antidote is to get together with others like you and begin to articulate who you are, both individually and collectively. This is as fitting for adolescents as Gilligan and others find that it is for women. The same applies to any group or individual feeling marginalized by the dominant society. Sharing each other's personal stories and learning through empathy and interpersonal interaction and exchange become paths toward defining and articulating alternative and otherwise submerged realities and values.

Close-Up, Personal, and Risky. Furthermore, this kind of connected, embedded knowing that Belenky et al. describe and that occurs so powerfully in the chapel does not keep a safe distance. This kind of knowing and learning are a more holistic, thoroughly involving experience than they are calm, collected reason. Participants, speakers and listeners both, are caught up, engaged with heart, mind, and spirit, not just with the head. As Maxine Greene notes:

> We will find the old poses of detachment and distance no longer tempting or acceptable. The separation between subject and object will no longer exist, nor will the comforting assurances of cool and shining certainties. Finding our way in this new domain of possibilities, we will be engaged, and we will be in search. (Green, 1991, p. x)

The search is not without risk. New ground and opening the floor to new voices opens everyone up to new challenges, sometimes to new threats. Those in positions of authority or seeking comfortable, predictable security are particularly vulnerable. Taking a chance is part of the package. As longtime C.A. History teacher, Janet Eisendrath, said about chapels and consequences of the level of freedom they afford:

> They vary. Some of them are almost lacking in taste. . . . But I've never been for censorship. I think you have to take that chance. . . . Nonetheless, it doesn't mean that if you're responsible for the school, you don't sit on the edge of your chair lots of time, wondering. . . . A parent did say to me one time, after his daughter had revealed more than he wanted revealed about the family and about him, he said to me afterwards, "Was there anything else about me you want to know?" So basically parents take a chance. Everyone takes a chance.

Chapels, Connected Knowing & Community

Trust & Connecting Through Common Experience. This kind of engaged, empathetic, experiential interchange demonstrated in chapels has an important communal dimension. Empathy and hearing each other's stories, as well as telling one's own story, offer ways of vicariously creating common experience. In their mind's eye, people step into each other's shoes, trying to imagine the other's experience. With the chapel, this kind of intimate personal sharing and connected knowing is done not just one-on-one, but with the entire school. So a powerful part of the Concord Academy experience of chapels

is collectively hearing each other's stories, and having in common the experience of hearing and telling stories — the same stories, at the same time, told in the same way. Through the chapel not only is connected knowing powerfully evident, but bonding, mutual understanding, trust and care of the whole community emerge from communal connected knowing and shared experience. At the same time, this kind of intimate sharing is made possible because of the high levels of trust and confidence in the community.

So a kind of chicken and egg question can arise. Which came first, the trust in the community and then the intimate sharing, or the sharing and then the building of trust? Maybe they come together and each engenders the other. A little more trust lets someone divulge just that much more intimately. That intimacy then engenders more trust and safety for the next person and so on. So it is not an either or, or first one and then the other proposition. They are too closely connected for that — interwoven. Causality isn't even the appropriate question.

Collective Witness. In this same way, individuality and community are powerfully interwoven through the chapel. People give highly personal, individual chapels, yet in the context of the full community. People listen intently and personally to chapels, and as a whole and fully attentive community. They give the power of collective witness to the speaker and are themselves building a powerful sense of who they are through that collective witness and shared experience. One student, Aden Kumler, expresses it beautifully when she says that even though people give individual chapels, once they give them, they belong to the community as a whole. She says, "I think, once your chapel's over, it's not yours anymore. I mean, it belongs to everyone else. In a way that's great.

Admissions administrator, Linda Whitlock, talks about the key role chapels play, saying, "It's a way of celebrating individuals, but, at the same time, of affirming the connection between those individuals and the community, and the community's connection to that individual." Another administrator, Joanne Hoffman, talks about the chapel as "a community experience every day." She goes on to talk about how it addresses "the

individual's place in the whole." From her perspective, in chapels "students articulate, every day, their individuality in relationship to the community and community responsibility." She calls the chapel experience, "a full and rich and textured part of the community . . . I would say the centerpiece of the community. . . . It's connected with what we feel about ourselves, what we say we are." With this issue of the relationship between individuality and community on her mind, one of the chapels I heard her give, as a main administrator at the school, began, "I am Joanne Hoffman, and this is our chapel."

Individuality & Community — Balance & Tension. Even though there is both individuality and community at play in the chapel and in the school, and even though these two coexist and build on each other, their relationship is not without tension. We saw the tension earlier in thinking about ownership of the chapel and about license. The duality that exists between individuality and community was ironically illustrated in the remarks of two seniors.

> Aden: I looked forward to giving my chapel and I thought about it since, like, the first day I ever heard one.
>
> Alice: That's true. Yeah.
>
> Aden: So, you're just waiting for the day when it's yours. (Aden and I laugh)
>
> Alice: Yours (laughs). Yours for the day. That's right.
>
> Aden: Community property.

For these two seniors, the fact that you can make it your own and that everyone will some day have that chance makes it community property. So individual license and possession do not obviate common ownership. Individuality does not negate community. In fact, it appears, quite the opposite. The ability of the whole community to acknowledge and honor the individual and to do this together, ritualistically, and for all of its members, cements its sense of community. It becomes our community and takes its identity in large part through acknowledging and honoring individuality, personal experience, and both how we are the same as and how we are different from each other.

The Chapel's Public Persona. It is revealing to see how the school catalog reflects this careful balance and relationship between individuality and community personified and amplified in the chapel. At one point Joanne Hoffman, Associate Head of the school, mentioned reviewing a draft version of the school's new catalog. What it said about chapels and individuality seemed so off-base to her that she gave considerable preface to her remarks before telling me what was proposed in the draft. In her words:

> My goal, for this year is . . . to reestablish the balance between individuality and community responsibility. The other day . . . the director of publications sent me down a dummy of the new catalog and said, "What do you think?" And I was reading about chapels and here's what it said . . . I can't imagine that this has been in our glossies. It said, "Chapels are one more example of the way in which we see the preeminence of the individual in our community." Symbolically, then, we were suggesting the preeminence of the individual over the community!

Remembering this, her voice was strong and emphatic, expressing indignation at the prospect of official school print potentially misinterpreting and misrepresenting the chapel and its focus as she saw it. Elaborating, she went on to say:

> This isn't what we mean. We want a balance between the community and the individual. And we're suggesting the preeminence of one. . . . So my idea is to restore that balance this year.

In contrast to the draft, the current catalog (1991- 92) claimed no preeminence of individuality in chapels, mentioning the chapel as one among several buildings, saying:

> Adjacent to the school buildings stands the Elizabeth B. Hall chapel, a restful place for community gatherings and celebration. In 1956 this abandoned early nineteenth-century meeting house was transported board by board from Barnstead, New Hampshire. Members of the school community, led by then headmistress Elizabeth Hall, reassembled and enlarged the building to serve as a non-sectarian meeting house. Here, three times each week, the school day begins with a talk given by a senior or faculty member.

Elsewhere the catalog, far from depicting the chapel as individual self-aggrandizement, describes chapels under the larger heading of COMMUNITY GATHERINGS AND CULTURAL EVENTS, describing what chapels are about and how they function in the community, "giving the school its special identity and vitality." The segment closes with "Because the presentation comes from within, chapels invite an intimacy with the larger community that carries over into classes, dormitories, and athletic fields."

Though some individuals may object to chapels as self-indulgent and egotistical, this has not been the official school perspective or prevailing public sentiment. As English teacher Clare Nunes remarked,

> While all of us may not like what we hear, we are bound to respect it. But we are equally free to dissent or even to disapprove, But it does not tend to be expressed, not a public disapproval, or certainly not a concerted disapproval.

C.A.'s alternative student newspaper "The Grape," however, has critiqued chapels as egotistical self-indulgence. Since alternative "underground" media often offer barometers of issues people feel conflicted about but do not air freely, this suggests that others at C.A. have similar reservations. Nevertheless, the view that chapels represent individual preeminence has not made it into an official catalog and is unlikely to be given the sanction of official school print. Officially and unofficially, chapels are so highly cherished that lambasting them is considered almost heresy. Several people acknowledged that the chapel and giving of chapels are sacred to C.A. As one person put it, it is sacred with a small 's.'

The most recent catalog ('94-'95) prominently features the chapel, including a wonderfully lively picture of a girl giving her chapel. It is doubtless intentional that the girl is Asian, or Asian-American, underscoring C.A.'s commitment to valuing differences, especially through chapels. In lively detail, language and visual image, chapels are brought to life for us and put into perspective. For illustration that page is reproduced on the next page (figure 7.1).

Further confirmation that the school is committed to a positive vision of the chapel was illustrated earlier by the chapel's frequent display on school publications, from yearbooks to catalogs to brochures (figures 4.1- 4.5). While the building as a whole is shown repeatedly, interior shots or students giving chapels appear only rarely. This recent shot of a student chapel (figure 7.1) is a distinct exception.

COMMUNITY GATHERINGS & CULTURAL EVENTS

Chapels

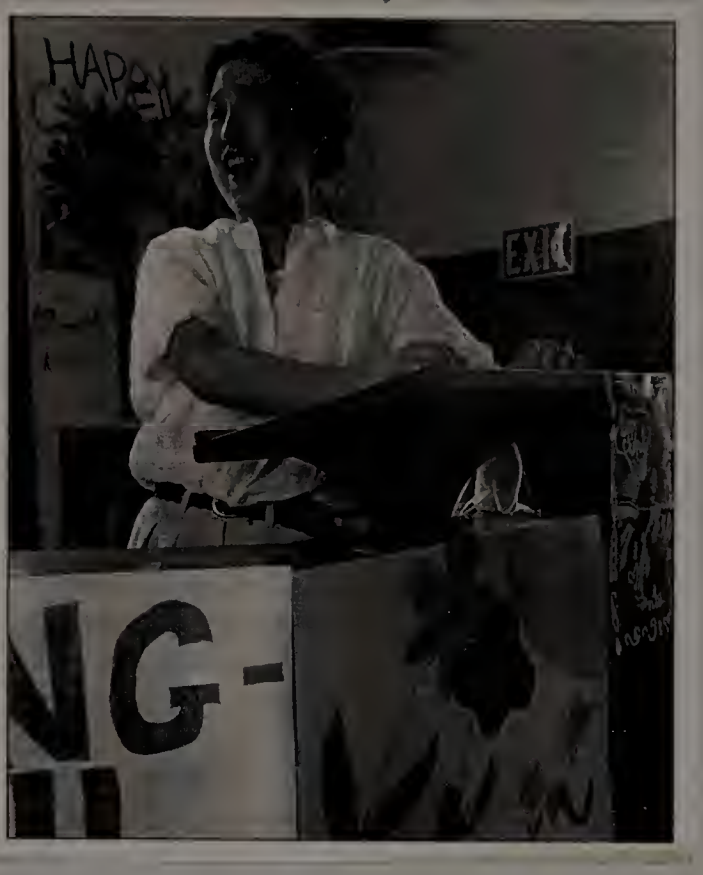
Chapels are an integral part of Concord Academy, giving the school its special identity and vitality. Three mornings a week the community gathers in the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel—a non-sectarian, nineteenth-century meeting house—to hear a senior, or sometimes a faculty member, speak. Traditionally, each senior gives a chapel talk. This much-loved ritual is fundamental to the school's respect for the individual. Thus, chapels vary as markedly as the individuals who deliver them. Seniors may recount childhood adventures, play songs, expound on life, thank teachers, parents, and friends, question some aspect of school policy, or share with the audience the struggles and joys of growing up. Because the presentation comes from within, chapels invite an intimacy with the larger community that carries over into classes, dormitories, and athletic fields.

Morning Announcements

Announcements two mornings a week in the Performing Arts Center are fast-paced and entertaining. The purpose of the fifteen minutes is to share information about anything from an athletic victory to a recycling initiative. Often student groups will choose to punctuate their announcements with brief skits, musical compositions, costumed speakers, song-and-dance numbers, or impersonations.

Assemblies

On every other Wednesday, the school gathers at mid-morning in the Performing Arts Center for a cultural, political, or artistic presentation. Assemblies encourage the community to think about itself in the context of the larger world. Students are exposed to the performing arts, topical political debate, presentations by schoolmates, methods for resolving school issues, and the professional work of teachers. Assemblies in recent years have included a former president of the ACLU addressing the topic of free speech, a Harvard professor speaking of African poetry, a group of college students discussing sexual harassment, a *Boston Globe* columnist, a flamenco dancer, an alumna photographer, the CA Jazz Ensemble, and student films.



Hall Fellows

Annually, Concord Academy honors Elizabeth B. Hall (headmistress from 1949 to 1963) by inviting a prominent guest to visit and speak with students and faculty. The Hall Fellowship program was established "to bring to the school each year notable figures in private and public life who will give the students a deeper understanding of their relevance to the society in which they live and will direct them toward ways in which they can most effectively serve their families, community, and world." Hall Fellows in the past have included Marian Anderson, Archibald MacLeish, John D. Rockefeller, Elie Wiesel, Buckminster Fuller, Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Dr. Henry Kissinger, Mary Oliver, and Senator John Kerry

Figure 7.1. Page from C.A. 1994-95 Catalog on Chapels & Community

I wonder if one of the reasons for this is the assumption that the building has remained essentially the same and will still speak to most alumnae, whereas the giving of chapels has changed dramatically over the years and hence might be disorienting for many. One of the most dramatic changes chapels have undergone has been visual, too, with the shift away from choir robes and Christian cross to T-shirts, signs, and personal mementos. Perhaps the school has made a politic and circumspect decision to display the chapel from the outside but not the inside, at least not in wide-angle detail, signs and all.

Chapel as Self-Affirmation

Maria Lindberg, C.A. '81, Publications Director '92 -'94, benefits from a long-standing personal understanding of chapels and direct experience with them. She says of the chapel:

> I think of it as, kind of like going home, in a way. It's a feeling of a comfort. . . . [later, describing being a tour guide] It was showing people the place, one of the places, where I felt the most comfortable, cause I always liked school, or enjoyed school, for the work and the learning, but Concord was the first school that I'd come to that I felt you could be entirely yourself and it was O.K.

The chapel plays a large part in creating that feeling and atmosphere at C.A. Giving a chapel is seen as a pivotal step in finding your own voice and affirming your own identity — the school letting you be yourself. The community as a whole welcomes you to that affirmation, publicly supporting the quest and receiving the gift of your chapel, which is thought of as a gift, as "giving" a chapel. People mentioned students not wanting to reveal their chapels beforehand to their advisors so as not to spoil the surprise of the gift.

Developmental Stages for Voice & Self

Indeed, telling your own story, from your own perspective is a powerful step in maturation and in empowerment. Belenky et al. in Women's Ways of Knowing (1986) see people telling their own stories as one vehicle to move from narrow procedural or received knowing to connected knowing and even further to the full, more integrated

mode they call constructed knowing. This is a maturation process that they see as developing in stages.

At the most oppressed level is passive acceptance of external authority. The individual's voice is silent, the person nearly invisible. At the next level the person emerges, but remains externally defined, fitting into society's limited and limiting definitions of who and what the person is, or should be. Still the person's own voice is largely silent. There is no sense of an individual, centered person grounded in and consciousness of her own unique being. Beyond this is a person actively and consciously self-defined, searching for her own identity and way in the world. Beginning to find and hear her own voice, this developing woman becomes preoccupied with internal self-definition, carving out her identity and understanding independent of and often in contrast to external frames of reference or authority. Only later may this private, subjective quest evolve and grow to find public voice and visibility as well.

In this last stage, which they call constructed knowing, the person comes to realize that knowledge is constructed, that context and perspective vary. Choices vary, but we do have them and make them. At this stage, dichotomies fade away and the kind of either/or propositions of our earlier list for men vs. women seems arbitrary and naive. People come to see that they can be <u>both</u> emotional and rational, that one amplifies rather than denies the other. Constructed knowers are more integrated, more whole, and continually becoming. As Belenky et al. describe it:

> We observed a passion for knowing the self in the subjectivists and an excitement over the power of reason among procedural knowers, but we found that the opening of the mind *and* the heart to embrace the *world* was characteristic only of the women at the position of constructed knowledge. (1986, p. 141)

With constructed knowers everything is up for grabs. "Who am I?" is typically asked again and again. How do I know who I am? How do I choose who I am? How do I continuously invent and reinvent myself? Internal and external narratives abound. Of this whole process of growth and development, Belenky et al. note:

> To learn to speak in a unique and authentic voice, women must "jump outside" the frames and systems authorities provide and create their own frame. (p. 134)
>
> We have emphasized thus far that quest for self and voice plays a central role in transformations in women's ways of knowing. In a sense, each perspective we have described can be thought of as providing a new, unique training ground in which problems of self and other, inner and outer authority, voice and silence can be worked through. . . (p. 133-134)

At Concord Academy, the community and the chapel provide a reframing opportunity and a chance for one's own voice to emerge and be heard. First is the question, to speak or not to speak. Some choose not to give a chapel at all, like the student who said, "I've decided I can't give a chapel because I don't know who I am." Some choose to stand before the entire school, but not to really speak. Perhaps they mostly play music. They have that choice. Others will choose to speak, but keep their words at an easy, safe, surface level, not deeply searching or revealing. Others dive deep and true and offer hints in their chapels of what their journey entails — suggestive glimpses. Still others use their chapels to come to grips with who they "really" are, to delve deep and then resurface, full of the wonder of the dive and able to tell about it. A few search the depths of the ocean as well as themselves and come to their chapels with insights and critiques of both, intent on change, focused on action. Whatever the case, through the chapel the search for authentic voice has a public context and public support. Being public it is also more loaded, more intimidating for some and more risky. People have an opportunity to speak their private voices, to reveal their inner thoughts and "true" selves in public. The "in public" part ups the ante, but at the same time it provides key community and peer support without which the voice might never dare to speak.

The setting as a whole offers vital support in several ways noted by Belenky et al. as pivotal to the search for authentic self — empathy, safety, trust, respect, caring, a strong sense of interconnectedness, person to person, a fundamental commitment to and belief in the power and centrality of people's own stories, own experience, and own perspective; a willing relinquishment of control on the part of authorities; freedom to choose; willingness to risk.

Part of the strength of chapels is surely that listeners are either past or future speakers themselves, so there is an immediate commonality and clear bond among everyone there. Part of it involves the scale of the chapel, its immediacy, its warmth and touchability. Much of it is due to the whole ethos surrounding the chapel, its history, the care that has gone into it over the decades, and all that the building itself and those in it have experienced. For a host of reasons, as people "give" chapels, the community as a whole "attends." By attends, I mean, listens with more that just their ears, is more fully present than usual, expectant, awake, ready — come what may.

The mutually supportive, vibrant atmosphere and dynamic allows the experience of giving and receiving chapels to become a vehicle for moving from one level of self-knowledge and action to another — from silence to speech; from other people's words and ideas to your own; from singular and self-absorbed to multiple and public.

Passionate Participation

Chapels are passionate and connected, words Belenky et al. use to describe constructed knowing. "Constructivists become passionate knowers who enter into a union with that which is to be known" (p. 141). They relate this to Michael Polanyi's "personal knowledge," the "passionate participation of the knower in the act of knowing" (Polanyi, 1958, p. viii, in Belenky et. al., p. 141). Constructed knowing is still "connected," but it takes connected knowing a step further by integrating knowledge into being.

> Among women thinking as constructivists, connected knowing is not simply an "objective" procedure but a way of weaving their passions and intellectual life into some recognizable whole. For women, at least, once they include the self, they use connected "passionate" knowing as the predominant mode for understanding. (Belenky et al., p. 141)

I think that this integration and "passionate participation" happens regularly at Concord Academy because of the chapel and chapels. Listeners in the chapel invest an enormous amount of themselves into that listening, putting themselves into it, partly

because the speakers are their peers, but also because they know that they, too, will one day stand before the entire school in this way. That full attentiveness also comes because the level of intimacy and "reality" is so high and, in turn, full attentiveness engenders a stronger sense of "reality." Speaker and listeners together create an experience of "passionate participation." We could call it "communion" — community union . "In the chapel we are one community."

Direct empathy and intense interpersonal encounter slice through thick fogs of difference and distance. The entire experience seems exceptionally "real" in a way that "reaches deep into the experience of each participant" (Belenky et al., p. 144). It relates to Elshtain's "ideal speech situation."

> . . . speech that simultaneously taps and touches our inner and outer worlds within a community of others with whom we share deeply felt, largely inarticulate, but daily renewed intersubjectivity. (Elshtain, 1982, p. 620 in Belenky et. al, p.146)

Mutuality/Everybody Wins

Furthermore, unlike more usual settings, being a listener does nothing to submerge the listener's own voice. With women, as with others not in dominant positions, finding and speaking with one's own "true" voice is often problematic. But with constructivists, as in Concord Academy and the chapel:

> Listening to others no longer diminishes women's capacity to hear their own voices. The capacity for speaking with and listening to others while simultaneously speaking with and listening to the self is an achievement that allows a conversation to open between constructivists and the world. (Belenky et. al., p. 145)

In chapels, this mutuality between speaking and listening in an "ideal speech setting" seem to prevail, even without a conversation in the usual sense. The speaker feels less risk in part because there will be no interruptions, no verbal back and forth, no need to defend or respond. Yet, listeners "respond" no less to the speaker, their total silence underscoring their presence. Later, when well-wishers come up to congratulate speakers with a few words, a hug, a clap on the back, there is an aversion to launching extended

discourse. The discourse may come later, quietly, privately, among close friends, but not in this quasi-public setting. Thoughtful letters may be sent. Countless students and faculty noted how students they didn't know at all came up to thank or congratulate them for their chapels. Most want to have an impact through their chapels and to give a "memorable chapel." Being thanked by those you don't even know confirms that. Belenky et al. say of constructivist women what could apply to chapel-givers in general, "learning that their ideas can be taken in and put to use — that their ideas can spark interest among unknown others — is an exhilarating and confirmatory experience" (p. 146).

Gender in Relation to Building & Carving

Gender and Claiming or Expecting Success

Issues that relate specifically to gender appear strongly not just in the giving of chapels, but in relation to the chapel as a building project as well. Take the question of success or failure and the carvers claiming their own victories, acknowledging their prowess. Thinking of those interviewed about their carving, imagine, for a moment, if these had been boys and were men who were now talking about their efforts. Would they so readily discount their own contributions? Or would they revel in how magnificently they performed, how vital they remember their own role as being, how central even? The literature reminds us that women have been acculturated to downplay their own personal achievement, unaccustomed as they are to societal accolades. Men, on the other hand, are used to getting and taking credit, their egos seemingly based on recognition, however fragile or deserved. Women, by contrast, too easily attribute their own success to luck, to happening to be at the right place at the right time (Heilbrun, 1988; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). One article on this is aptly subtitled, "What is skill for the male is luck for the female" (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974).

Women who do apparently succeed, often report feeling like "impostors," as if they couldn't possibly have succeeded based on their own talent and worth, and surely they will be found out one day. Just like our carver of the O's who suspects that maybe she had some other letter altogether, since the O's look too good to be hers, or who breaks out in laughter at the ridiculous idea that she might have any talent. I am reminded, too, of the carver who remembers that the principle thing she learned in carving was that it's O.K. to make mistakes, that mistakes are retrievable, that there is a way to recoup, even when one is sure that she, herself, has botched the job beyond repair. Mistakes are part of the process.

This, in itself, is a powerful antidote to the fear of failure. The message was and is, expect mistakes as a natural part of learning and of the process, and expect them to be moved past, to be reparable. They might even present exciting, creative opportunities. Some carvers report this as the most critical lesson they learned from Molly Gregory, the woodcarving teacher, and from working on the chapel. Not one to make bold claims for herself, nevertheless, I am sure Molly finds quiet satisfaction in hearing that.

Having talked at length with Molly, I have no doubt that she is crystal clear about the importance of that life lesson. Having thought of her as a doer more than a thinker when I was at Concord, I was mesmerized when I met with her for this project. Her clarity, thoughtfulness, and thorough integration of an entire educational philosophy into discrete projects was remarkable to me. She also expressed such genuine warmth and sincere concern for young people as full, thoughtful, and interesting human beings, that I was thoroughly surprised and charmed. Reports from carvers and others who worked directly with her all conveyed a great sense of satisfaction at having known and worked under her guidance. What better opportunity for young women than to learn from a woman, a carver and builder at an architectural scale — both remarkable for a woman, then or now? And who better than a woman to understand the pivotal importance of being allowed to make mistakes without recrimination? Learning by doing becomes a way in for women.

Personal Connections Among Carvers:

Camaraderie. For those involved, the process of building and carving was more about people than about product. Almost every student carver and builder I spoke with mentioned that when they thought of their work on the chapel, they most readily thought of Molly and of the other carvers and builders and the camaraderie among them. They met at one time in a barn, at another in a basement on campus, and sometimes even off at Molly Gregory's home in a barn in nearby Lincoln. Woodcarving and building happened after the regular class day at C.A. So the clear memory for many of them is the time they spent together talking as they worked and building a strong sense of connection to each other.

Clover Nicholas, C.A. '58, was involved for years, starting as a young student refurbishing pews, moving on to carving, and eventually carving one of the long angels flanking the Corinthians 13 quote. Clover remembered the strong friendships that came out of working on the projects and noted that even when they had to totally redo the huge Corinthians carving, "Nobody minded, because it was such fun . . . so we get to be together longer."

Clover added there are still strong bonds among many of the carvers, and when one carver, Evie Watts, became seriously ill recently, "It was really her Concord friends who did keep up with her in the end and kept coming to see her when she was sick in the hospital." Later, after Evie had died, the school asked Clover to help orchestrate a memorial service. A whole group of carvers came back to Concord for reunion and for that service. As Clover remembers the planning, ". . . we started trying to figure out who would be the best person who . . . could speak, who could stand up there and not burst into tears. And then who really knew Evie the best and would do the best job?" It is not the letters or the wood the carvers mostly remember and cherish, but the people.

Another carver I met claimed never to think about the chapel or her role as a carver. She did say, however, that she was still friends with other carvers. The collegiality of the

experience and those friendships were still important to her. Clover tells me that this very carver was one of the most supportive during Evie's illness. In speaking with me, however, this carver said she never really thought about the chapel or carving. Yet when I met with her in her house, she promptly produced a block of wood prominently displayed in her kitchen bearing on one side her carving of a fish and on the other her practice for her letter for the Corinthians 13 carving. This was not something for which she had to rummage, hidden away on a back shelf or attic trunk. I began to wonder if people always leveled with me or with themselves. Hard to know.

Connected, Relational Knowing. Thinking of carvers and builders remembering each other and building strong bonds together, reminds me of the work of several authors who talk of women as connected knowers, as experiencing life in connection to other people (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Striver, & Surrey, 1991; Miller, 1976). Development through relationships is contrasted with the more usual conception of human maturation involving increased individuation, independence and separation. The Stone Center at Wellesley College has been pivotal in promoting work on women's development issues. Their publication of a collection of essays entitled Women's Growth in Connection (1991) expounds on the idea of maturation through relationships. One essay in particular focuses on women in late adolescence,

> . . . for women the sense of self is refined, enhanced and strengthened, not through a series of separations but through the inner experiences of relationships marked by mutuality and affective connection. Being in relationship, empathically sharing with another, and maintaining the well-being of relationships function as important motivations for action, and sources for self-esteem and self-affirmation. (Kaplan & Klein, 1991, p. 123)

Kaplan and Klein go on to discuss how academic settings can undermine or omit some of the ingredients most key for young women to develop into fully effective and empowered women. Where women thrive on connections, relationships, and cooperation, the academy stresses individual achievement and competition. Mutual peer and familial supportiveness is supplanted by critique and isolation. Sharing and trust become rare in a

setting where students feel that they are vying for attention and for grades and where they are pushing themselves to measure up to standards often presumed to be objective and exacting. Knowledge, too, is considered as disconnected from the rest of life and from feeling, friendships, or relationships — disembodied, if you will. So, for Kaplan and Klein, the development of young women's interpersonal skills and capacities are cut short, short-circuiting their natural potential for relational growth and development.

> This division can result in a narrow approach to learning, cut off from students' broadest realms of curiosity and inquiry, which are in fact the wellsprings from which the deepest learning occurs. This explains why many women students feel invalidated even in the face of academic success and diminished in self-esteem to the extent that their successes have cut them off from avenues of relational growth. (Kaplan & Klein, 1991, pp. 128-129)

Chapel Projects as Connected Learning. At Concord the whole range of chapel projects became ongoing antidotes to academic competition, isolation, and disconnecion. For student carvers and builders, as Molly Gregory noted, not only did something "real" happen, but it was "team play." The entire Corinthians carving story, of each one taking a letter and considering each letter in relation to its neighbors, is a metaphor for collaborative, collegial learning and doing. Small wonder that what people remember and focus on now from that experience are their relationships, their connection to the people involved, from students to faculty, to administrators. Clover Nicholas talked about their teacher, Molly Gregory, as well:

> I suppose, for me, a good part of the experience was influenced by Molly Gregory, who was such a wonderful person and a particularly wonderful person to encounter when you're an adolescent and you're kind of looking for the meaning of life, you know, that kind of thing, because she's such a philosophical sort of person and she sort of discusses things in a very quiet way. But she raises very important issues. And it's always phrased in, "Well, what do you think about this?" She doesn't, kind of, impose her view <u>on</u> you as so much as just getting you to think about it.
>
> So that having hour upon hour . . . with <u>her</u> working on things with your hands, so that you have this sort of nice rhythm of work . . . while talking with a person who really knew her own business at working with wood and also was such a wonderful human being . . . that had to be a very, very important part of it. But having people that you knew actually take the chapel apart and put it together again, <u>that</u> was really neat.

Clover Nicholas's sense of affiliation with other carvers, builders, and Molly Gregory was echoed by other carvers and builders too. They reflected a preoccupation with process over product.

Remembering Molly Gregory. Another carver whom I met at the most recent Alumnae/i Weekend spoke up after I gave a talk about this project, and said, "You've forgotten a very important part about the chapel and carving — that is, how subversive it was." When I pressed her on what she meant, she mentioned how they had met in a basement and how the whole project was somehow out of sight, quite secretive, and how Molly Gregory's whole approach was somehow subversive, and most deliberately conceived. When pressed beyond that, she was evasive, however, leaving me with a knowing look and a sly smile, like one who had just shared a clue to a vast and unnamed secret. She did reveal, however, that she still keeps very much in touch with Molly Gregory and that when she bought an old house in Cambridge and completely gutted it, Molly was the one she got to redo it for her.

It reminded me of what I had come to realize about Molly Gregory — a woman I had not known or spoken to in my own time at Concord and one whom others at the school expressed being only vaguely aware of as well. For those who did encounter her, she was exceptionally real, quietly subversive, private, set apart, maybe revealing only a part of who she really was and what she was about, though I have no doubt that she was and is crystal clear in her own mind. No mere diversion, for her, this carving and building. No. This struck at the very heart of the matter and challenged fundamental assumptions underlying the enterprise of education itself. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn, to discover a remedy, even to create an unexpected and delightful surprise. Mistakes are not the automatic debit education usually presumes. You can learn by doing, by starting in. You don't have to have the answers beforehand. We will return in Chapter 8 to explore Molly Gregory and her approach in more depth. For now, though, suffice it to say that

most carvers with whom I spoke had little doubt about her critical role in the entire chapel project and steady, but important influence on their lives.

John Dewey & Experiential Learning. There is a striking parallel here with the work of John Dewey who claimed that "recognition of the natural course of development . . . always sets out with situations which involve learning by doing. Arts and occupations form the initial stage of the curriculum, corresponding as they do to knowing how to go about the accomplishment of ends" (Dewey, 1974, p. 364). Building on Dewey's effort, Donald Schon (1987) describes a traditional craft approach to learning:

> Students learn by practicing the making or performing at which they seek to become adept, and they are helped to do so by senior practitioners who — again in Dewey's terms — initiate them into the traditions of practice: "The customs, methods, and working standards of the calling constitute a 'tradition' and . . . initiation into the tradition is the means by which the powers of learners are released and directed." (1974, p.151)
>
> The student cannot be taught what he needs to know, but he can be coached: "He has to see on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between means and methods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can't see just by being 'told,' although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him see what he needs to see." (Dewey, 1974, quoted in Schon, 1987, pp. 16-17)

This is an entirely different way of learning than most schools are currently accustomed to. Schon calls it "reflection-in-action" and he sees it as involved with learning-by-making. It could be called a transactional approach to education. Its interest is not just in understanding things, but in changing them, in transformation, in making something happen. It is completely embedded in process. Education becomes mutual encounter and experimentation, more closely akin to hands-on experimentation in science or to performance art, than to our typical approaches to academic disciplines.

As we shall see, transforming something has a lot to do with embracing it, with it becoming a part of you and you becoming a part of it. To make your mark on something, to transform it, is to own it. Both person and object are mutually transformed. This is no passive acquisition of someone else's knowledge, no empty vessel being filled up with facts and figures, no disembodied, disconnected information that might some day, under

some special circumstance, with luck, surface as actually useful. It is useful, functional, and actual here and now, with direct and immediate implications and practical consequences. Learning by doing and its implications surface throughout our study of the chapel and are given special attention when we return to Molly Gregory and to women later.

Exploring chapels as experience and opportunity for voice, identity, and passionate, connected knowing is one way of unveiling chapel characteristics strongly affiliated with women — embracing here the whole C.A. community. Our next chapter considers real women in their historical and ongoing connections and presence to and through the chapel.

CHAPTER 8

THE CHAPEL & WOMEN'S PRESENCE: HISTORIC & ONGOING

"Both history and story occur in a dynamic present . . . the crucial choice of what will be remembered is ours to make." — Francis Bartkowski, Feminist Utopia, 1989

The Chapel & How Women are Remembered

This chapter asks, "When people involved with Concord Academy think about the chapel, how do women fit in?" How do they fit in terms of the character of the chapel and how do they fit in terms of the actual physical transformation of the chapel. How present for people today is the historical role of women in taking the chapel down, bringing it to Concord, reconstructing it, carving, and making the steeple? Do people think about those early stories and if they do, how do they think about them? If the stories matter to people, how and why do they matter? What, if anything, is important to people about the early role of women. In addition, do people see any of the things that women's involvement means to them at play now, themselves, in their own lives? The role of time and participants' contexts will be discussed here as well, as these intersect with memory and meaning.

The Chapel's Qualities Linked to Women

Complementing the way in which the chapel reflects "women's ways on knowing" (as conceptualized by Belenky et al., Gilligan, and others), the chapel also has important ties over time to women's involvement in the physical building and its ethos. Several people commented that, for them, the chapel is strongly tied to the school having been a women's school. Several noted how strongly the chapel, with its simplicity, its modesty,

its intimate scale and homey quality contrasts dramatically with the huge stone edifices standing as chapels and monuments in so many boys' schools. A sampling of people's comments include the following:

> That building [the chapel] is very special. And now, to sort of take this full circle, I find those handsome stone Gothic cathedrals given by 21 year old millionaires to their private schools fairly inappropriate. And I love this homely old structure . . . because it's heard so much truth and so much love and the statement from St. Paul is . . . about what it takes to get through life properly.
> — Ron Richardson, French Teacher

> When I think about the chapel . . . and participatory architecture . . . I'm struck, first of all, by the fact that the building feels quite feminine to me. In a way it's very different from the typical chapel of boarding schools or colleges which are usually grander, built of stone. Or they're, again, a lot of wood inside or outside . . . and just don't have the simplicity of line or of furnishings which this chapel does. So I'm just struck again by how the head of the school who purchased the building and participated in its disassembling — as well as key faculty members then, as well as the entire student body then — were women. And I don't think that's an accident at all.

> . . . And it's interesting that the male students here, and I think the male faculty, and I know the male head of the school, have waxed eloquent on the school's history as a girls' school. And I think it's no accident that chapel is here and is not at, you know, Middlesex or at St. Paul's or Andover or Exeter. [all originally boys schools] You know, it's just that it's too embracing and it's just too . . . simple. I mean it, and it's unadorned. — Linda Whitlock, Admissions

> If we did have to name one place [to symbolize the whole school], it would be the chapel. But I guess what I do like about the school is that it doesn't dominate. It's not sort of, um . . . I mean, when I go to the Groton School and see their chapel, it's a bit too much for me. —John O'Connor, History Teacher

Women's Historic Roles Recalled

Besides contrasting the Concord chapel to huge, stone, male monuments at other private boarding schools, many of those I spoke with specifically remarked about the chapel having been initially inspired, moved, and reassembled by women. Mrs. Hall was mentioned time and again and is still strongly associated in many people's minds with the chapel — to wit, the renaming and dedication of the chapel in her name. Some see women as critically influential and important in setting the tone, values, character, and ethos for Concord Academy as a whole. At the same time, others claim to consider the role of

women rarely, if at all. First, let me share some of the thoughts from those who do think prominently of women when they think of the chapel and of Concord Academy.

Linda Whitlock's Perspective

Linda Whitlock, recently arrived at C.A.'s Admissions Office, sees the role of women, Mrs. Hall in particular, and the entire early taking down and reassembly of the chapel as critically important to Concord Academy. Speaking slowly, thoughtfully, and deliberately, she remarked:

> It never escapes my notice that this was disassembled by people who had a commitment to Concord Academy; that it was then rebuilt by people at Concord Academy for themselves . . . and for all future members of the community. And I sit there three mornings a week, and I look at the carvings and I think about the pews.

Later, after describing chapels in detail and speaking at length about the balance of individuality and community through the chapel, Linda returned to talk about the chapel having been taken down and put back up.

> It seems to represent something . . . um . . . eternal about Concord Academy, or at least the Concord Academy as I have learned it this year and as I try to represent it to prospective students and families, and that is the choices that are possible for individuals within this community of Concord Academy, simply because we try hard to be a community which pays attention to the individual. So again, it's that duality. . . . We think that community can't exist without strong individuals within it. But at the same time, individuals really can't be strong and absolutely free to choose unless they have the support of a strong community, which gives them support, identity, affiliation, affection, respect, and all those things.
>
> When I think about that chapel building, I think about the individuals who made a decision, I gather, that Concord Academy really needed a place of serenity and tranquillity . . . reflection, privacy . . . But the solution [her tone takes on a playful enthusiasm now] to the need for that kind of a place was not commissioning an architect to, you know, draw up plans of what this building ought to be like, and relying, as is usually the case, quite heavily on the expert's own thoughts. But that, in typical Concord Academy fashion, the solution — even if it was serendipitous, which makes it all the more compelling — the solution was to have found a wonderful building which seemed to serve the purpose, with a few changes, but which needed, then, real participation, real participatory action, by some members of the community.
>
> The decision wasn't made to hire, again, expert, you know, disassemblers and contractors and builders to take it apart and to bring it down. But that, again, the individual is important and the individual can provide for the community at

> Concord Academy. And so those individuals spent the summer taking it apart with their very hands.
>
> I mean, what a gift! What an absolute gift! What a statement about the importance of the individual to a community. What a statement about how even the mighty, you know, can take pleasure and learn from the most humble kind of activity. You know? As was demonstrated by the headmistress's involvement in doing this. And then, once back on campus, that we can, you know — adolescents and adults alike, men and women alike — we can build something of beauty and of . . . also function. That we can provide that <u>for ourselves</u> by <u>relying</u> on ourselves.

Later in this interview, we talked about Mrs. Hall, her strength of character, and her "just do it" philosophy. Linda revealed that she has given special thought to leadership styles and models, and that she aspires to be the head of a school one day herself. We talked about Mrs. Hall demonstrating and affirming that it's fine, even admirable, for women to be strong, both physically and in character. Linda said emphatically that the topic of women should be "a sub-text of your thesis. It's not chapel, it's <u>women</u>, you know, as women."

I asked her if she thought the women now think much about this, saying that I don't get the sense that they do. She answered, "I well, yuh . . . I don't know. Probably ummmmm. . . . maybe not. Maybe not. But some of us do." At that we both broke into long, spontaneous and wholehearted laughter, drawing each of us close within a circle of shared understanding and irony. Then, like pulling in the strand of yarn that has unraveled and wrapping it back into its original ball, she said, warmly and knowingly, "And ain't I a woman too." Full circle. The role of women mattered then and matters now, to some of us as women.

I offer her picture here (figure 8.1) to amplify her words. Linda was wonderfully encouraging and supportive to me in this study, inviting me to stay in her home, sharing ideas for other case studies, and even driving me around Boston to visit potential study sites. This was early on when I thought that the C.A. chapel might be just one of several cases I examined. Her enthusiasm and willingness to jump in and be a part of my effort made it more refreshing and fun, especially as we speculated and explored together, as we

laughed and pondered and discussed well into the night . One detail I learned from Linda was that Harambee (C.A.'s Black student organization where she served as an advisor) hoped to gather a compilation of Black students' chapels for Baccalaureate.

Figure 8.1. Linda Whitlock, Sometime Co-Conspirator & Confidante.
Also a C.A. Admissions & Marketing Exec.

Women. Connecting, collaborating, learning in relationship. How many times it seemed that we were on parallel journeys with each of us helping the other see better through the fog.

Returning to the "presence" of the chapel's women, some alumnae, teachers, and students I spoke with mentioned the role of women readily and enthusiastically. Others didn't think especially about women, one way or the other. Still others came to a more gradual realization that moving and rebuilding the chapel was an exceptional undertaking for women.

Other Post-Carvers and Me

For me, not being a carver or builder myself when I was at C.A., the chapel seemed like a powerful example of learning by doing and an amazing accomplishment for women and girls. Doing this study I was surprised that so many original carvers and builders

made so little of their experience or their particular roles. I start to wonder if maybe people are most empowered when they no longer think of something as difficult or mysterious, when they do not make much of their own participation. Until you feel or become powerful enough to act, to do, acting and doing can seem momentous. But once you begin, carry forward, and actually accomplish something, you realize it was not all that impossible. It wasn't, after all, out of reach, unknowable, incredible. Or so it seemed as I talked with the doers.

Not so for those who came after the carvers and builders and saw their work, however. Those who came after often held the doers in high esteem, marveling at their work. One alumna, Marian Ferguson, who worked later building the steeple, made these comments about the Corinthians carving that was done before her:

> I remember staring a lot at the lettering and thinking, "Why didn't anybody screw up? All those letters are so perfect. And they were all done freehand. I mean, they weren't done by a machine. They were done by people like me and you. And there aren't any screw-ups. And maybe there are in the carvings [referring to the angels on the sides] little bits of individuality and new folds that maybe hadn't been part of the original drawing. But the letters are pretty perfect and very readable, even from a distance.

Another student from that time, M.A. Swedlund, who never did become a carver, also marveled at the work, both the carving and the rebuilding of the entire building, saying:

> At my age of teenagehood there weren't a lot of things that impressed me. But <u>it</u> [the chapel] really impressed me a lot, that the kids were involved in <u>building</u> the chapel. I mean, that was so <u>amazing</u> to me, beyond anything I thought kids could do, that it really, it really um, empowered me, a lot. . . . And I always wished I'd been part of it . . . I thought, Gee, I wish I'd gone to school when that was going on. Would that have been a great thing. I would have <u>loved</u> to have been part of taking that building down. I mean, that was just right up my alley. . . . I never got around to it, but I always sorta wanted to be part of that crew that was doing those things.
>
> And so, it was always sorta out there, besides it . . . working out so well. I mean, like, it wasn't a scrub job. I mean, it was just a beautiful, beautiful chapel and a really wonderful space. That was a highlight. And . . . if you hadn't asked, I probably wouldn't have thought of it — but I'm sure it was one of those things which sort of gave me the confidence to say, Hey, there's lots of things you can do. It was one of the first things that took me to that place of, Hey, you know, just cause you've never done it <u>before</u>, you know, you can <u>do</u> it. You can. There's lots of things you can do that you wouldn't have thought. So it was very empowering, that whole thing.

> I say: Yuh. I think I had that same feeling too, especially cause you think (whispering) Gosh, how'd they do this? And kids . . . kids from our own school.
>
> She interjects, loudly, vehemently: "Girls!!" . . . And it was an all women's project, Mrs. Hall and Miss Young . . . they were the ones who pretty much did it and decided to do it and wanted to do it. They had some male help, but not a ton.

Again, Mrs. Hall and Miss Young are specifically mentioned and the role of women is considered crucial. For alumnae still at Concord Academy when Mrs. Hall and Miss Young were there, they are indelibly associated with the chapel — especially Mrs. Hall.

M.A. talked further about how she went on in her life to think of things as doable,

> . . . in relation to building things, making things, craft type things, particularly, I wasn't afraid to try anything. It was like, Oh sure I can. . . . When I was in college and a little bit afterwards, that was easy for me. I didn't go take lessons. I was pretty sure I could figure it out on my own, how to do it. So you just start.

She mentioned Mrs. Hall telling the story of taking the chapel down and rebuilding it, of numbering all the pieces and just starting in, one step at a time. That let her see how they could have done such a huge project. "You know, you just take it apart, give it a special number. You know, then you put it back up. It's like building blocks!" she said, laughing. Later she added, "Most buildings you go in are mysterious and that's it. You don't think about, 'Oh wow, it was, you know, put together by men.' You don't think about that. And you think it takes incredible talent."

So for her, knowing the story of the building, being in it, and seeing how well it turned out, combined to demystify building and to let her feel unabashed about taking on projects herself. And at the same time as she imagined how great it would have been to have been involved with moving the chapel, or with carving, she went on to recount all sorts of major building projects she has actually accomplished since in her life — from building a little cabin in the mountains with only hand tools and no power, to renovation projects, to most recently being the contractor for her own new house. Characteristically, these she dismissed with a wave of the hand, insisting that her role was nothing

extraordinary, nothing to make a fuss over. So, apparently, oftentimes other people's efforts can bedazzle and allure us, while our own seem entirely mundane.

Here was one alumna who took the message of "just do it" completely to heart. Yet she, too, seemed reluctant to claim special credit or prowess on her own behalf. Political activist, longtime chair of her town's School Committee, on the board for years of a local peace organization with national prominence, she seemed to view her own activity as unremarkable. When I asked whether she preferred to be anonymous for this study, she seemed indifferent. But later when I mentioned using her name, she said, "I thought this was supposed to be anonymous." I returned with, "It's completely up to you." She replied, "No. Go ahead, use my name. I was just kidding." A part of me wondered, though.

Later still, I decided that I would love to include pictures of some of the people I had met whose stories and memories I quoted extensively in this paper. "Pictures!" she exclaimed.

"Yep," I replied. "But don't worry, I don't have to use yours."

"O.K.," she said. Then, knowing that I had taken this shot of her some years earlier, without another word she added, definitively, "Use that one where I'm directing traffic for the peace march." That shot (figure 8.2) may give you a sense of M.A.'s forthrightness, mischievousness, and underlying sense of irreverence and play about this whole business of who we are or claim to be in the world. Is a part of this whole chapel story that women aren't used to thinking of themselves as accomplished, aren't used to broadcasting news of their prowess? Nor does society encourage women to claim or seek recognition.

A hearty sense of humor and irony may be a woman's own path of resistance: M.A. here; sisters earlier laughing about their carving and singing; Molly Gregory who, when I called to ask about her and about talking with her for this project had said, "I'm an antique!"

Figure 8.2. M.A. (Rowland) Swedlund, C.A. '63. Directing Traffic for Peace March

When I talked with Mrs. Hall, she told me how she was taking care of Pete Morse, former C.A. Biology teacher. She said that Pete was, "The same, like always, only older." When I visited Mrs. Hall at her home in Great Barrington, she playfully introduced her husband of over sixty years, a lawyer retired after a prominent career, as "my current husband, Livy Hall." Humor becomes refuge and avenue for reclaiming command, for playful, irreverent commentary on prevailing dictums, and for subversively asserting what matters to you.

So, women can laugh at themselves more easily than they can claim victory. I wish to claim victory on their behalf. Not being a carver or builder myself, I am free to marvel at the entire enterprise and have no societal pressure to be demure about it. Not being one of the doers myself, thinking about it all from a distance, the process was and is still mysterious and alluring for me.

For my own part, I admit to gazing up at the big exposed beams, interlocking into trusses in the chapel, openly amazed and inspired. I look around at the smooth plaster

walls, the tall windows with their irregular glass and the huge magnificent carving. I take in the space as a whole and much as it feels warm and welcoming, old and comfortable, much as it has great physical appeal, it is knowing that kids did this, women did this, we, as a school — not experts, not builders, not architects — did this — that is what gives me hope. That is what brings life, meaning and an absolutely vital heartbeat, for me, into the chapel. I was going to say "into the building," but, no. That is what makes it a chapel for me, not just a building.

Katy Rea Schmitt's View & Teaching

One teacher I interviewed, Kate Rea Schmitt, has been involved with C.A. for over thirty years, as a student '60-'62, a science teacher since '79, and finally as a C.A. parent. I asked if she thought it mattered that the initial project involved mostly women. She replied:

> People who weren't professionals is what really impressed me. My understanding is that Mrs. Hall did this because she saw it. She saw an opportunity. She wanted it. She had all the pieces delivered here to campus before the trustees knew a thing about it. I like that part . . . She took the initiative, saw it, went ahead and did it, and worried about the trustees later.
>
> . . . Secondly, I'm pretty sure it was virtually all novice labor. It was teachers and students who went up there and did it, and got it here, numbered all the pieces and reassembled it here. And I don't know how much, if any, professional help was involved. And it's only recently that it's dawned on me that really it was women who were in charge of the project. It didn't hit me so much when we were still in school.

As a student, she said, it did not strike her as unusual for women to be involved in building because her mother and father reversed the usual stereotypes. In her words:

> I grew up in a family that I didn't know at the time was unusual. My father was the one who read stories to us and put us to bed. My mother was the one who put up curtain rods and did odd jobs around the house. And she's the one with the science degree. So it may not have occurred to me that there was anything unusual about Mrs. Hall finding a building and putting it back together. My mother used to do renovations of houses . . . So it was no big deal. And it's only since I've gotten out of college, and more and more as time goes on, that I realize that maybe it is a big deal. Or it was a big deal then.

She went on to describe how now, as a science teacher, she works on issues involved in teaching science to boys vs. girls. "Similar kinds of issues" are raised, she explains:

> How you encourage young women to have confidence in science and stay in science . . . how do you get these kids who traditionally don't see themselves as scientists, to do it? And so I've become more aware of classroom dynamics. What happens when the teacher is male? What happens when the teacher is female? What happens in a classroom? Who is more vocal? Who gets called on? All that kind of stuff. And so I'm always looking for role models. I'm tired of having people say, "Well, let him do it.". . . I don't care if they do it, but they ought to trade off. That . . . same sort of thing, making sure they're not just the observer, but the doer, or whatever it is . . . and that they are believed in and treated as first class citizens. So, because of that whole issue, it's made me more aware of what women are doing in every area that maybe isn't common.

In the "just do it" spirit of learning by doing, Katy Schmitt has her class taking an old Volkswagen apart to see how it works. Citing their lack of experience getting their hands dirty and dearth of learning directly by doing, Katy noted that it is, ". . . not only that girls don't know, half the boys in this school don't know either, because they're not tinkerers. They don't take stuff apart." Like Mrs. Hall and her bicycle, Katy intends that the project not end with taking the VW apart, adding, "We're gonna get it back together." When I mentioned her project's parallels with the chapel, she said, "Yuh. Do it. Play with it. Don't sit back and let somebody pour it in the top. You have to do it." Katy is pictured on the next page, with her periodic table (figure 8.3), beside alumna Marian Ferguson whose story follows shortly (figure 8.4).

Later, in talking at length after the formal interview, I recommended Kathleen Weiler's excellent book on feminist pedagogy, Women Teaching for Change: Gender, class, and power (1988). Weiler's book had helped me consider the issues of class and gender in relation to C.A.'s learning by doing. Through her lens it was suddenly easy to see that not having students do hands-on work is gender and class-based and biased. Alternatively, to do hands-on projects could be used as a strategy to turn class hierarchy and gender stereotyping on its head. To my surprise Katy said that Kathleen Weiler taught at C.A. when Katy first came there and it was she who introduced Katy to feminism, planting the seeds for her present investigation into gender bias and science education.

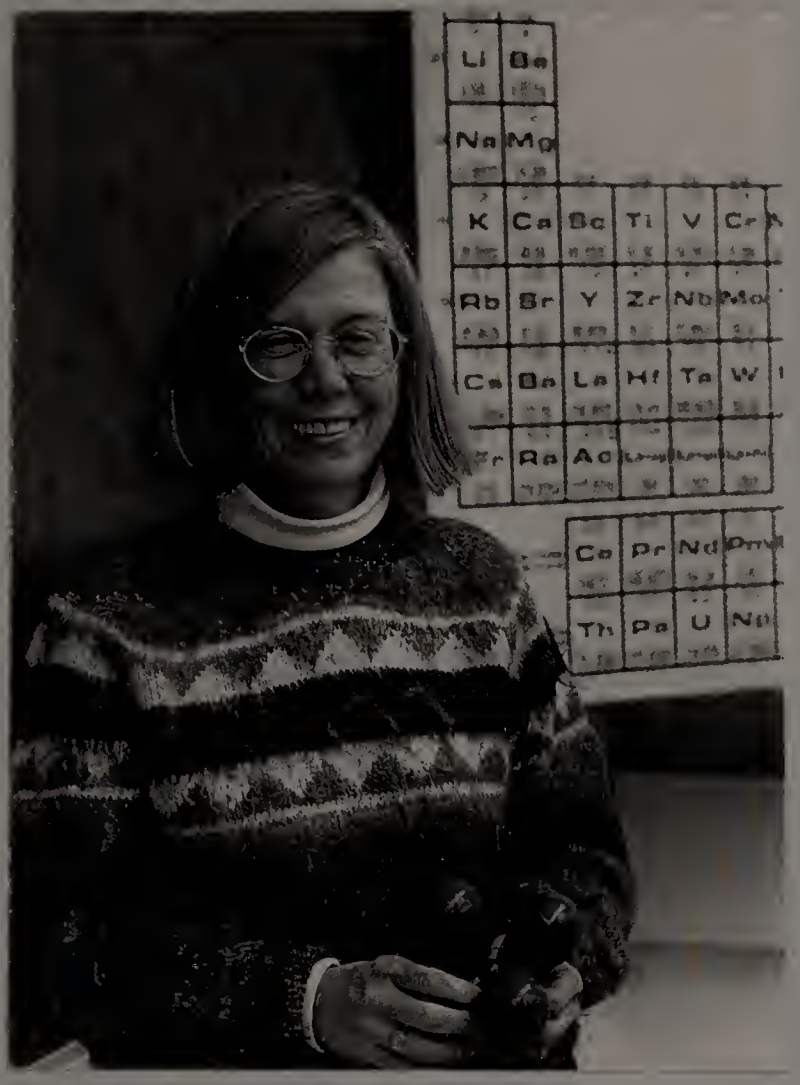


Figure 8.3. Katy Rea Schmitt & Her Occasional Table

Figure 8.4. Marian Ferguson, C.A.'63

Breaking the Mold for Women

Alumnae Break Ground Themselves

Marian Ferguson, '63: Editing Adventures. Alumna, Marian Ferguson, a chapel steeple-builder, went to C.A. just as the chapel was put into full use. She sees the chapel as intimately associated with Mrs. Hall and her philosophy of education.

> Where there's a will, there's a way was knee deep. I mean, she [Mrs. Hall] was knee deep in that. And the chapel was a real emblem of that . . . So empowerment, in the sense of, if you have a will, you can do it. . . was really her. And I think a lot of us may have come to the school with some of it, but certainly went away with more.
>
> I asked if she felt empowered now in her life.
>
> She replied: Oh yeah. Absolutely. I mean, you had to get through the women's thing. I mean, I found avenues that women hadn't traveled down before and I

had to prove to people that it's not a liability. And you know, you're still busy working out differences in styles.

In publishing [her field] women weren't allowed to be editors. Women weren't allowed to be sales reps. They weren't allowed to go on the road. How could they change their tires? They were gonna be picked up in bars. They can't travel alone. And this was a field closed to women until 1967. But it was also the prerequisite to being an editor. So there were no women editors in the business, in college text publishing.

And I came from a background where I'd been with another company as a marketing assistant, a jack-of-all-trades, in Berkeley. And I had the scent of success attached to me, cause I'd been involved with some very successful books. So they hired me at Little Brown . . . It was just an aura . . . it was an affiliation. Nothing to do with the individual particularly. But it allowed them to let me bypass the sales rep route. They were opening it up to women at that point. But they made me travel like a bandit as an editor. And I did it. I made up for a lotta lost time. And I hit almost every major campus in this country — all but six states.

But there were a lot of doors that weren't . . . I mean, and men didn't know how to deal with it. Because women had never been editors. The management didn't know how to deal with a female editor — traveling with her. . . . But there were a whole set of skills, in terms of working with authors, that are less developed in men, that allowed me to do two books in one year, when most editors couldn't do one in four years. I mean, you're able to nurture and I have some other skills, organizational too. But I was . . . with very little effort, not difficult to be the top of the heap.

She eventually moved from publishing to raising four children, running a Bed and Breakfast, and most recently ('95) completing a Master in Education program, with thoughts of possibly one day running a school of her own (see figure 8.3).

Katy Rea Schmitt, '62: Daring Science. This story is curiously paralleled by Katy Rea Schmitt's, who chose to pursue chemistry in the mid-1960s when women were steered away from the hard sciences. Having majored in chemistry as an undergraduate, after college she spent time largely at home raising her family, until much later when she got involved in a National Science Foundation program sending people back to college who were "under-employed" in science. Katy describes her program for women in chemistry who had undergraduate science degrees and had been out of school for five to fifteen years:

> We formed a real tight little knot, out of twenty four grown-up women, you know, past college age, who really loved each other. But . . . what some of these other women had to go through to get there I never experienced. Prejudice.

> What are you doing majoring in chemistry? A lot of them really wanted to be chemistry and physics majors and were steered into biology because that's where you put the women. Encountered a lot of resistance to what they did.
>
> And I do remember at Wellesley some conferences with Deans where they were saying, "You sure you want to major in chemistry? Wouldn't you rather major in music or biblical history?" because often you're always getting A's in music and biblical history and not in organic chemistry. And I would say. "I don't want to major in those things, I like chemistry. It's gonna be marketable some day. . . I really want to major in chemistry. I like science! (emphatically)

Without fear of breaking new ground for women and with the "just do it" approach, both these alumnae bring to mind Mrs. Hall's undaunted, go for it spirit.

Mrs. Hall Educates by Word & Example

An Unusual Female Model. For these alumnae and others I spoke with, the chapel had everything to do with Mrs. Hall and her whole philosophy of "just do it," of persevering, of being undaunted by tasks others might quail at, and of breaking the mold for what was expected of women. She herself mentioned how working on buildings was something women were not, in her day, expected to do at all.

In the booklet Concord published on the history of the chapel, Mrs. Hall recounts how, in 1954, prior to moving the chapel, she worked with Miss Young on her home, which was, similarly, an historic building, this time rescued, moved, and reconstructed by Miss Young, largely on her own. Built in 1720, the building had been used most recently for outings of the Spark Plug Club, made up of General Electric engineers. After a partial fire, they sold the building, intending to replace it with a new one. As Mrs. Hall described her own involvement with the project,

> One day I went to visit the operation and stayed to help. There was something immediately satisfying about pulling off plaster and dumping the whole mess down through a hole in the floor into the cellar below. Far greater, however, than the perverse pleasure of destruction, was the joy and excitement of becoming more intimately acquainted with our American way of living in the eighteenth century. There was the discovery beneath the eaves of a weaver's shuttle, a child's shoe found elsewhere, a cartridge box, and one day the chilling discovery of a manacle. Each of these articles had a story. Work on the house became a recreation for us both. Whenever we could we stole an afternoon away from school. But never on weekends after the Saturday when we were discovered on location by the engineers! "A couple of crazy school teachers."

> "Won't you girls let us big strong men give you a hand?" "Don't you girls want to stop playing house now and come over where it's clean to have a drink with us?" And so on until we gave up to return only when we could be assured of privacy. (Hall, 1962, pp. 3-4)

With the same sense of humor and irony that marked Mrs. Hall's outlook and era at Concord, a yearbook from that time picturing faculty, students, administrators and staff, showed a little cluster of groundskeeper/maintenance men, under which was the single caption "the men." And indeed, during Mrs. Hall's tenure, aside from these few, plus a handful of male faculty members, and two males working on the business end of things, the daily make-up of the school was entirely female.

As a student at Concord myself at that time, I had no doubt that Mrs. Hall offered an unparalleled model of who and what a woman could be. She was frank and forthright, rather than demure. She had no qualms about taking charge and actually leading. She was strong and wry, at the same time as she was warm and endearing. She looked you straight in the eye with a piercing intensity that cut right through all sorts of layers of subterfuge or protection one might have assumed. Irreverent and playful, intimidating at times, she was, to many of us, larger than life, and still is. So it is no surprise to find that alumnae from that time invariably mention Mrs. Hall, particularly when they think of the chapel.

Mrs. Hall's Chapel Storytelling. The chapel was where Mrs. Hall held forth most often to the school as a whole, sharing stories and anecdotes that revealed her values and sense of what Concord Academy could be, should be, and oftentimes was, for her. She shared what she hoped it would become for us. Mrs. Hall was and still is a quintessential storyteller. Up at the front lectern in the chapel, she would lean forward conspiratorially one moment, her voice a carefully crafted stage whisper that had each of us holding our breath. Then, at a carefully timed moment, she would stand her full, not insubstantial height and boom out the next part of her story — her accent and intonation mimicking some character she had encountered at a critical juncture. We, in turn, bolted

upright and felt as if we, too, had been there and heard those very words, just as she intoned them.

Her stories were always from real life and always allegorical. And none was more dear to her than the story of the fire marshal, the assembly hall, and the adventure of finding, bringing down, and reassembling the chapel itself — not to mention the carving. She told these stories with great relish and bountiful detail, capturing our imaginations and sparking our enthusiasm. And always with a lesson. Just do it. Don't wait around for somebody to assure you everything will work out. Try it. See what happens. Put all the love and energy and caring you have into it. The story of the carving, of course, she took as a metaphor for the school as a whole. When people do things independently, with no thought to their neighbor, of course there will be problems. But when each one has a part of the responsibility and sets her own effort in relation to her neighbors, always mindful and attuned to the neighbor, the whole emerges harmonious and magical. And, Mrs. Hall is quick to add, don't give up easily, but persevere in spite of gigantic set-backs, like the carvers who had to abandon their entire first effort, but were victorious in their second try, a long, cold winter and entire spring later.

So, yes, the alumnae from that early time, when they think of the chapel almost all mention Mrs. Hall. Countless alumnae recount the story, as she recounted it, of taking the building down, piece by piece, numbering all the pieces (a key detail never, ever, omitted, and rendering the whole project understandable, it seems) and then reassembling it like a numbered jigsaw puzzle. And they mention her with a sense of admiration and of play. What do they think of when they think of the chapel?

> Especially Mrs. Hall. It brings back lots of things about Mrs. Hall and the kind of woman she was to go out and find this thing and take it . . . and <u>cajole</u> people into giving up their summer vacation and taking the thing apart piece by piece and bringing it back. (Marty Poole, class of '58)

> I remember Mrs. Hall whistling, teaching us how to whistle. And that was real important because I mean, she just didn't fit any of the molds. I mean she, that was what was so neat about her. And all of a sudden snowballs. <u>Started</u> snowballing. We're walking back from lunch and all of a sudden getting hit with a snowball and looking around. And she acted sort of dee-da-dee (in a sing-

song). And starting these terrible snowball fights. Everyone would start throwing them. Oh yuh. And she'd be sitting there, dee-da-dee. (M.A. Swedlund, class of '63)

Memory of Mrs. Hall & Chapel Move Fades

Aloian Succeeds Hall

Mrs. Hall is not usually mentioned by alumnae after her own time at C.A. Even a few years after Mrs. Hall had left Concord, apparently people's strong association of her with the chapel had waned, although she made a lasting impression on some who encountered her only briefly. Rachel Duane Lee, '66, a first year student the year Mrs. Hall left, had read the booklet about the chapel even before coming to C.A. and can still picture Mrs. Hall in her red robe speaking in the chapel. When we talk, Rachel recalls, "Mrs. Hall was the chapel!"

Yet Rachel also associates the chapel with Mrs. Hall's successor, Mr. Aloian, partly because of taking a photograph of Mr. Aloian's daughter in the chapel — a photo she gave to Mr. Aloian, at first secretly and later acknowledged. Years later, Rachel's father happened to see Mr. Aloian and introduced himself as Rachel's father, saying, "You may not remember my daughter Rachel, who was at Concord when you were. Mr. Aloian replied, "Oh, yes I do. I think of her every day," explaining how he cherished that picture of his daughter and still had it up in his hallway at home. For Rachel, this poignant experience remains an important and moving association with the chapel. We can expect others to harbor memories of the chapel, its import, and its connections in a similarly particular and personal way.

Indeed, how strongly would people associate Mrs. Hall with the chapel once she had left C.A. and students there had little or no personal experience with her? Would the story of the chapel being found and reassembled persist? Would it die out altogether? Even today opinions differ about how much these stories and associations live. Some say that somehow or other, without being retold every year, the story permeates down through the

years and has some community presence. Others say they doubt if people think much about it.

I sense that soon after Mrs. Hall left C.A. these chapel stories were not so regularly told and retold, perhaps to assert the identity and importance of the new head over Mrs. Hall. After all, she had acquired legendary status and to follow her as the head of the school would not be easy. Phil McFarland recounts in his History of Concord Academy (1986) that Mr. Aloian's personality was as self-contained as Mrs. Hall's was ebulient.

> The collected manner of this campus guide [Mr. Aloian] could hardly have been more different from the eruptive personality of his predecessor as head . . . There had been challenges in following the eloquent and winning Betty Hall, in sitting in her office chair, behind the desk where she had sat for fourteen vital years . . .
>
> An anecdote suggests the difficulties. On opening day the previous September, Mrs. Hall had thought to send a large bouquet of flowers to be placed on the altar of the chapel. When the welcoming service began, however, and the new, young headmaster stood for the first time before the assembled student body, the flowers were not on the altar. Two fine people — and the motives of each seem so easily understood: Betty Hall making what she would have seen as a gesture of support and well-wishing — hurt to have the gesture rebuffed — and David Aloian unable to bring himself to appear before students on that initial occasion alongside so aromatic and insistent a reminder of who was absent. "I had to establish myself," he said later, reflecting on those first months. "I was succeeding a charismatic person, who had been such a dominant personality in the school, who seemed to engender such great admiration from the students." (1986, pp. 188-189)

So, if he felt threatened by her legendary status, Mr. Aloian may have intentionally downplayed Mrs. Hall and her association with the school. In these circumstances, one can easily imagine the chapel's story being obscured by neglect.

My impression is that this continued almost unabated until Tom Wilcox arrived as head, taking a genuine interest in the school's past, in its strengths as a girls' school, and in Mrs. Hall's pivotal leadership and abiding influence. In my view, it is no accident that Tom Wilcox delights in retelling the story of the chapel, Mrs. Hall, the carving, and Molly Gregory, the woodcarving teacher. Nor is it by accident that it was under Tom Wilcox's direction that the chapel was rededicated and renamed in honor of Mrs. Hall. Between Mrs. Hall's exit in '63 and Tom's arrival in '81, however, the chapel's history and early story seemed more elusive.

Coeducation and Chapel Painting Project

Not only with Mrs. Hall's immediate replacement but later, in the 1970s, when the school struggled to become coeducational and was intent on establishing its new identity, it made sense that both Mrs. Hall and the all-girls history of the school might be down-played. One alumnus I spoke with came to Concord in 1972, just a year after the first boys were admitted, and graduated in 1976. In his time, Peter Wallis said, "the story of the chapel having been taken down was not really taught as community knowledge." The brochure written by Mrs. Hall on the chapel history was "around," but was little read or circulated. He described how as a junior he had undertaken an independent study of the history of the school and learned about the whole chapel story. He went on to say how his junior year a lot of the chapels given were negative about the school. In addition, the school was suffering financially, and the buildings and physical surroundings were becoming run down.

Thinking about trying to revive people's spirits and do something on a school-wide basis to rebuild a sense of community and optimism, Peter decided that the school needed different ways of coming together. As he put it, "I had a feeling there was a need for some community-building." In his senior chapel in February he had talked about the need for community. That spring, doing an independent project and inspired by the chapel story, he launched a school-wide project refurbishing and painting the chapel. Peter noted:

> The chapel is near and dear to the hearts of students at C.A.. It's an important symbol of the things we think are unique to C.A. and the reason we loved it so much. So I thought maintenance and clean-up of the chapel would be fun. So I put up sign-up sheets and, to my surprise, lots of people signed up. I feel that the fact that the chapel was going to be painted meant a lot to a lot of people . . . I don't recall having gotten permission, but I could have. The process just unfolded very smoothly. I don't remember anyone trying to dissuade me or trying to tell me how to plan the day . . .
>
> Joe George (head of maintenance) did a great organizing job. Some faculty participated. Madge Evans [a science teacher] got a gardening project going. Thirty to fifty students participated — over 10% of the student body. It was a beautiful day. Everything was there that we needed: scrapers, paint, brushes, trash bags. People were very enthused about being involved and it went on into the afternoon. And what impressed me most was not only did people have a

good time, and prove very productive, but there was a lot of recognition about how great it was to be involved.

When I asked how he felt about pulling the whole project off, he said,

It was a real positive lesson in, if you want to do something, you can. It was an early positive experience in having an idea, organizing it, seeing it through, and being successful — an important lesson as I go through life.

Learning about the history of C.A., with the story of the chapel's origins was critical for him, and, as he said,

Having done the report on C.A. was essential to having taken on the project. To me one great thing about C.A. was that as a history project you could do something very personal like that. To me it was important to be able to delve into something as personal. To me, it made history come alive and made it more relevant. And you could say that by doing that, it changed history . . .

Toward the end of our talk I asked him if there were any agenda he had that I might take on for him concerning the chapel, anything I could incorporate into my study on his behalf. He said that he'd always been interested in how people outside the Christian tradition viewed the chapel. "Is it a secular institution or something they have to get over — an issue?" He said that he had heard that a number of years ago there was a move to eliminate the chapel as a symbol from everything at the school, from logos to publications, seemingly in response to the concern over its religious associations. Apparently the move lasted a couple of years and finally fizzled. As he put it, "It's hard for the symbol to die cause it's at the core of the values that most people at Concord hold dear."

He acknowledged, however, that this may not be so for everyone, and noted that still calling it a chapel underscores its religious meaning. In the back of his mind, however was "Hey, this is a chapel, but not religious." We saw earlier in dealing with questions of inclusion and ownership how a concern about religion has surfaced throughout C.A.'s involvement with the chapel. One would expect the issue to be increasingly apparent as C.A. becomes increasingly diverse. The issue held special interest for Peter Wallis because so many have strong associations with the chapel and have had such important personal experiences there. In Peter's words:

> I think, as a symbol, I can't think of anything that comes close to it at C.A. I think if you asked anyone about it, it would be the same. It is incredible to think of all the work that went into that. In a way, it's too bad there's not an opportunity now to do something similar. I would think that those who did it are proud and happy about it. I enjoy thinking about it . . . the experience of having painted the chapel and everything. It certainly had an effect on my life, I'll tell you that.

The photograph that follows (figure 8.5) shows the chapel repainting project and may convey some of the scale and festive flavor of the undertaking.

Figure 8.5. 1976 Chapel Painting Project

C.A. as All Girls: Who Cares?

Does it matter that C.A. was once all-girls and who really remembers this and cares about it anyway? For some of us it matters a lot and connects in a central way to the chapel, as we will explore below. Others hardly even think of it. We may find the differences revealing. Let us look at some examples.

Although he was highly familiar with the story of the chapel coming to Concord, Peter Wallis never specifically mentioned women in our conversation. Maybe, coming from one of the earliest boys' classes at the school, he was naturally more apt to think of boys and their integration into the school than he was to dwell on women. Sometime later I was also surprised to talk with a current psychology teacher at the school who had been graduated from Concord herself in 1985. She stopped me after an all-school talk I gave about this project and said that she was stunned to remember that the school had once been all girls. Somehow, she had forgotten that. Now it made her stop and take stock.

John O'Connor, History Teacher

John O'Connor, arriving at C.A. in the early '70s, just as the school was grappling with coeducation, is still acutely aware of the school once having been all women and girls. He sees the role of women as pivotal to what the school is today and wishes it would incorporate more projects like the chapel painting — what he calls "real" learning, where something actually happens. He was one of the few to mention the painting project at all to me. John describes his sense of the school during his first time there this way:

> I do think of the chapel in terms of the story you're talking about, of it being taken down and put back up again, cause I read the booklet, the story of the chapel. And we still have copies of that around. I suspect that probably, out of a student body of three hundred and twenty-five people, I'd be surprised if twenty-five students have read that . . . So I'm aware of that connection and um . . . know the story and it sort of ties in with my perception that one of the things that makes Concord Academy special is the role of students. And at that time they were all women and women who were empowered, although I never use that word. That's sort of a current term, but . . . they certainly did things . . .

When I first came to the school, it was the year after coeducation had begun. . . . I guess one of the things I found so . . . I probably couldn't have articulated it then. I mean, I think these are things that I imagine I thought then, but I realize I've learned since. But the fact is that this school had a flavor to it that was very different from all the other schools that I had known closely. It's because of the role of <u>women</u>. And I do think that there are certain traditions that sort of live on, <u>even</u> without being activated. Cause we don't have, believe me, we don't have speeches on what this place used to be. No one ever has talked about the interesting people who were the heads of the school. . . . And I really got an impression that Betty Hall's role and the role of other unmentioned people sort of lives on in the school.

So I kind of feel that when I hear the people doing their chapels, that in this curious sort of way it's related to all of that. They always refer to the carving. If they don't know anything else about the building, they're aware of that, cause they've heard about that the letters were done by different people and so forth. So somehow, what I'm saying is that, without saying formally OK, every two years we'll give the story of the chapel, every two years we'll talk about all the people who've led the school, uh, every four years we'll make it mandatory reading to have read the school history or something — without doing that, somehow or other it percolates down.

<u>Tom Wilcox, Headmaster Since '81</u>

Headmaster Tom Wilcox is particularly conscious of the chapel's early story, perhaps in part because it is so strongly associated with Mrs. Hall, whose presence as a head had such a strong impact on C.A.. On several occasions I have heard Tom refer to the special character of Concord Academy as explicitly connected to having been a girls' school. I think Tom believes that C.A. is still imbued with a core set of values and beliefs that it established early on as a women's institution. He seems to take pride and delight in that and consciously continues to build on it. Tom seems to have uniquely understood this legacy of the school and of the extraordinary woman, Elizabeth B. Hall — Betty to her friends and colleagues, but always Mrs. Hall to us students.

It was Tom whom I heard recount the story of the chapel to the gathering of new students and parents crowded into the chapel together, asserting that "Concord Academy is not about buildings, it's about people . . . except for this building." When I interviewed Tom at the outset of this project, he was quick to tie the historic legacy in with the present. After mentioning the diversity of C.A., its respect for individuality, and the central role of

the chapel in students defining who they are, he went on to talk about the early chapel's move and reconstruction:

> . . . not as many students as an ideal dream would have liked, but certainly some students, were involved in taking it apart and rebuilding it. The sense that the stories Phil [McFarland] told in the first service in there, of the putting up of the spire, et cetera, the sense that it, more than any other building at Concord, is owned by the community, builds a very real sense of who we are. The fact that it can be non-sectarian, and yet, bring us together philosophically and emotionally is really rather extraordinary. It had to emanate from something.

Tom went on to talk about consciously rekindling the link to earlier times at Concord, through tribute to Mrs. Hall, dedicating the chapel to her in 1985 and reprinting the booklet that told the story of the chapel, updated now to include the dedication to Mrs. Hall. As mentioned earlier, Tom saw clearly how pivotal Mrs. Hall was in those early days of C.A. and the chapel seemed particularly emblematic of her. In his words:

> . . . she was the one who found it. She was the one who built it. She was the one who, more than any other individual, inscribed something on the face of this school. And to name anything less in her honor would be giving a great person short shrift.
>
> When we did dedicate it in her honor, we reprinted that book, the story of the chapel. And certainly giving everybody a chance to read that, I think, reestablished that legend . . . I was as excited about that in terms of giving alumnae of the fifties and sixties a sense of ownership of the school, cause there wasn't anything redone. Seeing that building associated with your time, and their time, remembered permanently seemed to be very important.

Tom Wilcox not only had a clear view of the past and its importance, but took concrete steps to insure that it be remembered. Whose story is told and what we choose to remember helps define who we are. Memory is selective and institutional memory is often manipulated in the interest of maintaining the powers that be. Deliberately resurrecting the presence of these earlier times and players represented a significant departure and was an important step in redefining C.A. as significantly connected to its history as a girls' school.

The reconnection was not just on paper, either. I was surprised to realize that for the rededication, C.A. had invited Molly Gregory back to do woodworking with students. Tom was excited and enthusiastic about the new carving and Molly Gregory, saying that the kids "loved it. And they loved her. She's fabulous." I realize that with all the fanfare

about Mrs. Hall, Molly Gregory is easily lost in the shuffle. Besides Mrs. Hall and the carvers, who never failed to remember Molly, Tom is the first one I have heard mention her. Others talk about the students carving and occasionally mention "the woodworking teacher" but anything about her, including even her name, seem buried, even though she taught at Concord up until 1972. But Tom remembered and not just by inviting her to the ceremonies, but inviting her to work with the students, to carve and do something real. For those who knew and worked with her, Molly Gregory was one of the women who made Concord Academy the extraordinary place that it was for young women in the '60s and beyond. Molly is shown below working with a student on the new carving in 1984 (Figure 8.6).

(Elizabeth West)

Figure 8.6. Molly Gregory Returns to Work with Students, 1984

Tom Wilcox, tireless in his desire to connect C.A. participants through time, is shown below (figure 8.7).

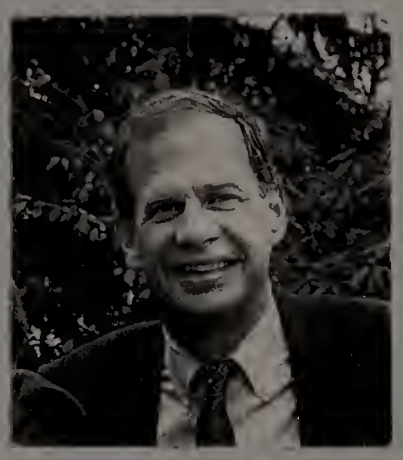


Figure 8.7. Tom Wilcox, Headmaster, 1981-present.

Coeducation

What does C.A.'s shift to coeducation have to do with all this? Even before it began to admit boys in 1971, coeducation was in the air and in the wings. History teacher John O'Connor sees the move to coeducation as connected to our story. Concord is the way it is now partly because it became coeducational "on its own terms." In John's words:

> I even feel the way the school went about coeducation somehow ties in with this whole story. I can't quite get the fit but . . . and I'm surprised we don't talk about that more. Basically what happened in the sixties, as coeducation spread around, is that men's institutions did female institutions the favor of eliminating them. That's what Andover did with Abbot. And it went!

John went on to describe St. Paul's overtures to Concord and brief student exchanges:

> This was part of an experiment. And if it had been carried off, I guess this school would have been sold. And then it would have become St. Paul's. But this school did not do that. It became coeducational, on its own terms. And I'm gonna bet — there must be more schools than I'm aware of — but the only one I can think of is Vassar that sort of went on its terms. And then it was soon after that that we were approached by Middlesex to be coordinate. Wouldn't we like to be coordinate with them? I participated in the coordination experiment. I taught a lot of Middlesex students. And I actually liked what I saw of Middlesex School and the students I taught and faculty members I worked with.
>
> But it really was true, you couldn't really have gotten two more different schools to try to cooperate. There were just very different attitudes. And they did have fairly typical attitudes toward what they thought girls should be doing. You know? So I think, if I were asked what happened to coordination . . . ultimately what it was is the spirit really was not there for what this school had been. It just simply could not have gotten along in that, long term, without Middlesex making major changes . . .

> But I think that, even when we did co-education . . . they just jumped into the deep end of the pool. Quite frankly it was a risky proposition, because we had no track record . . . What I'm saying is that a lotta the things if we had, sort of, not done it until there was an absolute sort of rigid blueprint for success, we would not have done it . . . So I think that's a part of the story here, that there is always some other way to do that.

I hear echoes of feminists asserting that women need to find out who they are on their own terms, not as a reflection of men in a context set by men, with terms defined by men. Concord's approach and philosophy were grounded in a high level of respect for women and the assumption that women can do just about anything. Theirs was not a strategy of accommodation. I am reminded of Mrs. Hall's, "Just do it." Find your own way, because nobody has mapped it out for you and if you leave it to them, you might find yourself removed from the map altogether. The just do it approach, on your own terms, can be interpreted as fundamentally subversive and counter-hegemonic. I think Concord Academy demonstrates that in how it went about coeducation, in its fundamental values, and in the chapel as it crystallizes and preserves them.

How far away are we from that today? When I talked with Peter Wallis about the chapel repainting project he instigated, he said "I think we'd have to be very brave to do a project like that today, in this day and age. We were probably naive enough then, without thinking through the possible consequences at the time." Ours is the age of litigation, of stepping cautiously and carefully, making sure not even a toe touches the water.

But the chapel's early lessons have not been lost on all of us. Some still hear the chapel whisper, "Don't wait for a solution handed down from on high. Don't assume you need the answers before you start. Try it. See what happens. Learn by doing." Some think boldly and creatively enough to seek out the Molly Gregorys of this world and bring them home.

"Real" Learning: Where Something Happens

John O'Connor

Later John O'Connor talked about how projects like the repainting of the chapel represent "real" learning to him, where something actually happens. He related how some computer and video projects at C.A. now are "real" in the same way that the chapel being moved and rebuilt, and later repainted was "real." In his words:

> We talk about, you know kids, kids do homework every day in all their subjects. Let's be honest. Most of that's a dead letter. You know, it's an exercise. And that's fine. But wouldn't it be nice if some of that worked? You get this many talented, bright people, if they were to be plugged into something that does have a plan, that's participatory, just the way you're describing it, and you don't have something that's dead, but, in fact, living.
>
> The closest I can get is I have liked the projects at Concord Academy where parents and students are brought in on a weekend and we paint things and fix things. One of the things that we've done is the chapel. And the truth is, if you want that building painted right, that's not the way to do it. O.K.? It's to bring in a professional crew and let's do it. O.K.? Now we've got sorta the best of both worlds. Sean, who heads up that end of the maintenance program, Sean Buckland, he is just a real pro. And so he has led some of these paint brigades where everybody's under the illusion it's just catch as catch can, but he's made sure that we don't mess up.
>
> But those things are great, because people. . . people . . . you know, they feel good about what they're doing. And so I'd almost rather settle for something that doesn't look quite as nice as it might have been if you did it purely professionally. But then you say, "Well, you know, this was done by students and faculty."

He unearthed an early slide show he had made with students and faculty about the school, for admissions, seeing it as something real, and taking pride in people's direct involvement.

> The last slide of that show was that this show was made by the students and faculty of Concord Academy who invite you to come to the school. And to me it was nice because it sort of said something about Concord Academy. You know, that it's um . . . you know, here you go, you know. We're not ashamed of what we do here.

Exquisite shots of the chapel, school, students and faculty were coupled with their moving testimony on what the school, including the chapel, meant to them in an engaging, participatory example of a project with real consequences. Since our first meeting John

shared his unfailing enthusiasm for education having a "real" context. He reminds me not to leave things just on paper. He seems so little cowed by momentum moving in the opposite direction that I begin to consider my own view too jaded and cynical. "Why not launch a participatory design or building project as part of my effort here?" he asks. "How about an intensive weekend community-wide work session?" Intrigued and encouraged, still I immediately think of constraints. Would that I were so hopeful or so ready as he. I offer his picture here, poised in possibility (fig. 8.8).

Figure 8.8. John O'Connor, C.A. History Teacher

Molly Gregory

This same concern with learning that was "real," where something actually happened, was expressed by Molly Gregory, C.A. woodworking teacher '58-72. The carving, steeple, altar, lectern, and music stands were done by students under her tutelage. When I spoke with Molly Gregory, we met in her home in Lincoln, Massachusetts, a wealthy suburb of Boston just fifteen minutes drive from Concord. Lincoln is not a place to suggest simplicity or humility. Yet here hid Molly Gregory's home in a barn of the

Hunsaker's, whose daughter, Melanie, was at C.A. during the early chapel and steeple-building days. From the outside little announced anything but a huge, old barn. A steep, narrow wooden stairway behind the barn leads up to Molly's two story apartment. Inside, the simple white plaster walls and rough, exposed beams of her rooms remind me of the chapel — straightforward, unadorned, elegant in their simplicity, stark in their integrity.

Seventy-seven years old when we meet ("an antique" she had said on the phone), Molly is a farmer now, up at 4 A.M. and finished mowing by 11 before it gets too hot. Self-reliant, and independent, her tan face is etched with the weather and the years. On her white wall next to me hangs a hammer, alone and proud against the wall — honored like a sculpture. Within moments I am captivated by this unexpected world and this remarkable, lively, thoughtful woman. She wastes no time in telling me what matters to her about the chapel.

> One of the things that . . . bewilders me is that people have kind of lost the ability to think that they can do things . . . for themselves. . . . I mean, in the first place, I think my whole childhood and upbringing has been determined by the fact that my father was absolutely fierce that you could do whatever you wanted to do. And nobody should stand in your way of it, because it was up to you. And if you didn't do things, then that was your problem.

She goes on to talk about how social security and withholding tax have robbed us of our self-reliance, assuming we can't manage these things on our own. She continues . . .

> I think it is true that with industrialization and with more socialization and so on, we have lost that kind of rugged individualism. So . . . be that as it may, I think . . . the chapel, therefore, was for me the most exciting teaching job I ever had. Although I've given over my whole life, I think, in a funny way, to fighting what I've just said. I mean, for instance, I didn't want to spend my life teaching in an institution so that people went forth and then did something. I wanted to teach, what teaching I did, I wanted to do with people I was working with . . . After Bennington, I went to Black Mountain where we were in our own building and so we did all the work there . . . And I had a chance to teach students when I was farming, or in the shop, or weaving, or whatever we were doing. So that it wasn't a question of just . . . I mean you have an attitude about work that goes with you wherever you are, I think. So then I went to Vermont where I worked with a lot of carpenters. And Lord knows they taught me a tremendous amount. But I hope also I taught them some.
>
> So Concord was the perfect setup for me, because I didn't go only to teach a course because they needed an art teacher. I went because there was something that we had to do. And I think that's what you're talking about in participatory architecture. Because you go at it . . . you're gonna do it. And then you learn,

for me, you learn properly. Umm . . . we went through a period of having too much teaching where it was supposed to be very important (her voice becomes deliberately precious and soft now, a mock whine) for you to do what you felt you wanted to do. (now her voice returns to normal) You had to be creative yourself. But that meant that your mind and soul and everything were taken away from the job at hand and turned into the person that was doing it, which is rather a dead-end street quite often.

Molly talks about doing architecture and having a context outside yourself.

And I think that was exciting about the chapel. For me teaching those kids was that we were going to do something absolutely beautiful, for the chapel, that people were going to look at, and so we had to make it work. And nobody was interested, particularly, in how each of us felt about it. That doesn't mean that we weren't creative . . . but we weren't focusing on being creative. We were focusing — well, we were — but our eye was on what we were doing.

Before continuing, I am eager to share a picture of Molly working with students in '57 as they carved the great Corinthians 1:13 carving for the front of the chapel (figure 8.9).

(Keith Martin)

Figure 8.9. Molly Gregory Supervises Student Carvers, 1957.

Considering the chapel as a whole project, Molly Gregory describes how dismantling the chapel was more the effort of Mrs. Hall, Bill and Beryl Eddy, and Livy Hall (Mrs. Hall's husband), than the students. But, "the steeple, on the other hand, we all did." Bob Lloyd, who worked for Molly, designed the steeple, but the students built it. As Molly describes it, "That was an example of the kids doing something and seeing it start to finish, the whole works . . . The carving was exactly the same thing." She sees giving chapels today as similar:

> . . . to extrapolate. . . another, I think the way this chapel has been used is very good, in the same way. Only it's slightly different, of course, because the chapel's finished. But the fact that every student who's gonna graduate has to do something <u>in</u> the chapel <u>for</u> the community is very good. And that's pulling stuff, our view for them. It's more or less, the same thing. . . And it's great that it has stayed. And they do take it seriously, each one.

I asked if she had noticed the experience having any effect on the students and particularly whether she felt that the experience was empowering for them. She replied:

> Oh, I think so. . . . At the dedication . . . I came away from that feeling <u>absolutely wonderful</u>, cause Betsy Mallinkrodt said that when she was doing the carving, the one thing that she had learned that had stayed with her since was that a mistake was quite often a good thing and not bad, and that you could adjust always. So I think that was one thing that I taught them. Mistakes could be exciting and not a disaster . . . a way to do something slightly differently.
>
> The other thing that was exciting was that it was team play. And I think that is quite an exciting thing, to be able to do a job that a whole bunch of people did together and so that it looks like a whole bunch. So I think that came up — came across. And I think they just loved doing it, really, because I'm sure they're proud of it. And I think they had a good time. You know, at Black Mountain the whole thing was predicated on our doing everything.

Coming from architecture, I was astonished to learn that Molly Gregory had been at Black Mountain, a landmark experiment in education for the performing and visual arts. Joseph Albers and other artists, performers and educators started Black Mountain College in North Carolina as an experimental school, premised on learning by doing and engaging a whole range of arts, crafts, building, and agricultural trades. Long before becoming famous, figures like William DeKooning, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Buckminster Fuller were involved. Students and faculty lived together at Black Mountain, growing much of their own food and building many of their own buildings. Molly came

to Black Mountain initially under a graduate fellowship to study with and assist Albers and stayed on as a faculty member, spending the next five years there. I asked what she taught and she replied:

> I ran the shop. So I taught woodworking and then I ran the farm. And at certain times I ran the work program, plus or minus. I don't think they ever really. . . They always wanted a man running the program. That was earlier on and it was better. But I used to fill in when they disappeared quite often. . . . It was an exciting spot, an exciting place, an exciting time. And I think it actually, in a sense, prepared me for the chapel job.

I am stunned at this news. Ran the shop! Ran the farm, the work program! At Black Mountain? How could I have never known this, I ask myself. Who else knows this, I find myself wondering. For a woman to have done this, at that time, in a program of such renown, amazes me. And not just any woman, but this very woman, sitting right next to me and having taught at Concord when I, too, was there. I secretly wonder if anyone at Concord Academy had any idea what an incredible find they had in this remarkable person. Later I learned that at one point when Black Mountain's director had left unexpectedly, Molly served as acting director of the entire college (Duberman, 1968).

The more we talk, the more I realize that the whole undertaking of chapel carvings and construction done under Molly Gregory's direction involved enormous forethought. This was no haphazard adventure or makeshift operation. No, here was a woman with crystal clear philosophy and grounding, who had thought this enterprise through in an incredibly fundamental and insightful way. She went on to talk about Black Mountain and how the entire school was organized around doing, around designing and building because you needed these things in order for the school to even happen. She contrasted learning because there is something at hand that needs doing to vacuous learning without an immediate context of need, just learning because it's supposed to do you good.

> Have you ever looked at <u>Architecture Without Architects?</u> [a classic book on indigenous architecture, which I tell her I used one summer as my guide for where to visit to explore indigenous architecture in Europe and Turkey].
> . . . I think that's what we <u>miss</u> now. And I think we're gonna think about that for your thesis . . . If schools can have a project that's important . . . other than just because it's good for you to do this. . . The other way, see, I think some

people. . . don't catch fire in the same way because they're not focusing on getting the job done. They're focusing once again on why is this good for me.

[later on] I think we're very mixed up, and I don't know what's gonna happen to us. I think that that's the real truth. And you can be at loggerheads with everything and it doesn't do you any good. But, why do we have the attitude that we have about labor? Well, I mean, the best fun in the world is work. . . . And it's not only fun, but it's wonderfully exciting to figure out how to do things, and to do it appropriately and all those things . . . For instance here people say, "Molly,you work so hard, why are you working so hard?" Well, I'm not. I'm playing. All of my life, I'm playing just as hard as I can. And it's true. . . .

The other thing people say that makes me bridle is, "Oh, but it's just grunt work." Nothing is just grunt work. You can do anything well and get pleasure out of it. Digging a ditch. You can dig a ditch well, or you can just . . . I've spent my life and I realize, every once in a while I look at myself, and I probably had more fun than almost anyone I know. I mean, really. But I have worked hard, if you want to look at it that way. But you can also think . . . played hard. . . . It's also the attitude about work. And it's about your attitude, your relationship to what's going on around you. . . .

I think your emphasis should be just on the participation . . . What we've decided, kind of, as we're talking, I think, has been pretty much that people have lost touch with the fact that doing things specifically is a) possible; and b) an approach, and c) satisfying — whatever you want to say about it — and that we don't train people to be able to do it. We turn the whole thing around and start with the doing. . . . I think that's what we really are missing. You see, we've allowed labor to be downgraded to such an extent that it's not even existing... Somehow we've got to get across the idea that you do things, and then you find out . . . If you really want to do it, turn the whole wagon around so that people want to do things, think that's the thing they're here for. . . .

I do think that's what we've missed. You see, we don't tell people it's up to them . . . And not only that, but that it is fun. That's what I think is so sad . . . The thing is, we've lost respect for work . . . Our little minds are all focused on getting out of it. And that's what the advertising media does also. Advertising media says, if you have to work, then you only work so that you can do whatever's fun. . . . But the thing is to have people realize that work is doing everything. It's the way you go at everything, even how you wash the dishes. And it isn't, there isn't high class work and low class work. There isn't blue collar work and green collar work. There's. . . we just all, and thank God we don't all want to do the same thing. I mean, we should honor the garbage man. Well, of course he is practically the king now, but . . .

So, we find underpinning Molly Gregory's and Mrs. Hall's work at Concord a belief in learning by doing, getting your hands dirty, not separating learning from action. Embed learning in real world consequences, directly and immediately experienced. Something happens, something has to work or not work as a result of our efforts. This same underlying approach is picked up and echoed by people teaching there now in the

persons of John O'Connor and Katy Schmitt. Perhaps there are others as well. In science, of course, with its emphasis on experimentation, learning by doing comes naturally. But Katy takes it a step further to say, let's work on something we encounter every day, not just on isolated test tubes and pendulums. Let's take a VW apart and see how it works. Just do it.

John O'Connor sees the same approach at play in projects taken up, or that could be taken up, by the school at large, be it maintaining existing buildings and landscapes or proposing that students and faculty be involved in the design and construction of new spaces or renovations. Like Molly Gregory referring back to her earlier days at Black Mountain, where they "did everything," John remembered the days of his first experience teaching when he was at the Hinckley School in Maine, started as the Goodwill Home Association for poor and troubled kids. There "all of the buildings were built by students and faculty." He is avid about wanting to reintroduce that spirit now at Concord Academy.

We Make the Road by Walking

Just do it. Setting your own course, your own way, and starting in is especially apt for those whom the mainstream ignores or tries to marginalize. Women are a case in point. Young people could be too. The "just do it" approach is not Mrs. Hall's alone.

Paulo Freire and Myles Horton are two men who have spent their lifetimes working with people not in positions of advantage or power. Their work offers strong parallels for us to think about in the chapel project. Myles and Paulo worked with people who were overtly oppressed, from poor Southern blacks and working class people to poor Latin American peasants. Freire's The Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1986) became practically a blueprint for grassroots education and organizing in Latin America and much of the so-called third world. Horton and others established the Highlander Center in Tennessee — one of the first places in the U.S. where black people and white people could come together to meet, discuss racism, and strategize over what to do about it together.

Myles's and Paulo's approaches mirror Mrs. Hall's. Their recent book We Make This Road by Walking (1990) demonstrates that you can't tell how it will turn out before you set out and the only way to find out is to do it, especially if you are forging new ground. The path that will let you walk your own walk and find your own way has not been carefully laid out beforehand or smoothly paved. Of course, if you want to keep paving that road and smoothing that road and filling in those potholes for somebody else's Cadillac, then stay right where you are. Don't step off the road for anything.

Maya Angelou, poet, author, and eloquent spokesperson tells a story of Ms. Annie Johnson of Arkansas in 1903. Maya reports that Annie said:

> I looked up the road I was going and back the way I come, and since I wasn't satisfied, I decided to step off the road and cut me a new path. (1993)

If yours is the position being ignored, subverted, or undermined, make your own way, and do it your way. Concord Academy and some of the people at Concord seem to have understood this, perhaps in large part because of their history as a girls' school.

Mrs. Hall broke the rules and it said to us, as students, go ahead, try it, see what happens. I remember vividly that she used to compare our situation as students to a kid on a rocking horse. She said, you can rock so hard you go flying off the horse and it topples and breaks. That's O.K. as long as you realize that you won't be able to ride the horse again unless you pick yourself up, mend your injuries, and realize that it's up to you to rebuild the rocking horse. Or you can rock just far enough to have a great ride, without actually falling off yourself and without wrecking the horse. Some may like to rock right up to the edge, tempting the horse to topple — a risk they're willing to take. The thrill of the ride is worth the possibility of failure. And failure is just another part of the game. But then, maybe there are some of you who don't even want to get up on the horse in the first place. It's up to you.

Mrs. Hall — as much at home on a tractor as behind a desk, as likely to be found poking around down by the river as in a board meeting. A woman who told students

stories about camping out in a cot in Barnstead, New Hampshire, seeing the stars through the rafters of the chapel, once they had the roof off. Just do it.

Other Reactions to the Chapel Dismantling Story

We have seen how some teachers, alumnae, and administrators at Concord vividly remember the stories of Mrs. Hall and Molly Gregory and the reconstruction and carving. Some we see integrate these stories into a whole philosophy and approach to education. What about some of the other reactions? How present for others is the story of the chapel's origins and earliest days at Concord?

Philip McFarland, Teacher & C.A. Historian

One for whom the story comes readily to mind is Phil McFarland, a C.A. English teacher since '65, just two years after Mrs. Hall left. As the writer of a History of Concord Academy, we should not be surprised that he thinks readily of the early days. In talking with him, however, these origins are not the first thing mentioned. First he tells me at some length about students giving chapels and how these have evolved over the years, often to his dismay, as he has taken offense at chapels meant to offend. I ask him if the chapel having been dismantled and reassembled matter much to him, saying "Is that very present for you? Does that matter to you?" He replies:

> It is for me, specifically, because I know the story so well and because I'm interested in the past, maybe more than in the future or the present. But I seldom fail to think about that when I'm in there. And if the present moment is obnoxious, I think about the history of the chapel all the more intensely. In fact it's a good sign when I'm not thinking about it. It means what's going on right now is satisfying. And an awareness of how the building was acquired and set up on campus does make it a richer space. You can look out the window or you can look at the carving. You can look up at the rafters and think of Betty Hall, when that roof was being taken down, up in Barnstable, and looking through at the empty sky that had been exposed by her day's work, from her cot in one corner [figure 8.10 below]. These thoughts solace you as you make your way through the occasional tasteless or offensive chapel presentation.

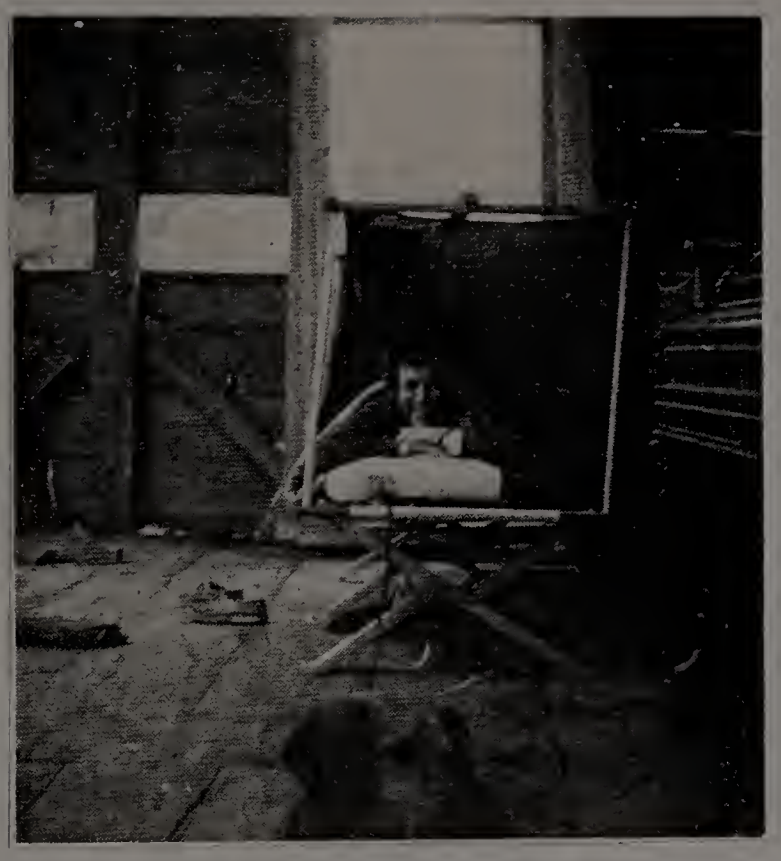


Figure 8.10. Mrs. Hall Peeks Out from Her Tent under the Open Rafters

Describing her time that summer taking the chapel down, Mrs. Hall writes:

> To this day, whenever I look at that corner of the Chapel where the organist sits, I can remember lying there in my cot appraising with satisfaction the evidence of the day's work which was all around and above us: boards gone which were there the night before, stars shining through a frame which had been solidly covered in the morning.

Not only Mrs, Hall, then, but also Phil McFarland now, thinks of that tent, open roof and starry nights. Although Phil McFarland arrived at C.A. after Mrs. Hall's time, he has intentionally spent a few days with her, "was very charmed by her" and "thought she was wonderful." So when he thinks of the chapel, he often thinks of Mrs. Hall. I also learn that he is little conscious of Molly Gregory, even though she still taught woodworking at the school while he was first there. He knew of her, but didn't really know her. She is not one who basks in or seeks the limelight, Molly Gregory. She prefers to do things without a lot of fanfare, quietly, beautifully, and completely. All the photographs I have seen of Molly show her engrossed in work, oblivious to the camera, “focused on what we were doing.”

Bill Bailey, History Teacher

Another longtime faculty member I spoke with was history teacher Bill Bailey who came just after Mrs. Hall left C.A. Bill's former wife was actually a student at Concord and a carver. Yet he spoke to me mostly about students giving chapels and only briefly about the early chapel days and chapel story. As with others, I asked, "Do you think that the taking down and putting back up of it is of present import, or not?" After a long pause he replied:

> Only as it speaks to the history of the school and the gift that we had . . . of Betty Hall, who could see the virtue of that experience. And that leaves us a kind of legacy that's sort of difficult to define, because we are all here and we weren't part of the experience. So what we can do is appreciate the building. But, of course the building could have just been constructed and designed right here. But I think the very fact that it occurred is part of the scheme of things that I heard so loud and clearly at the thing that Phil McFarland and I did Saturday where alums related various stories about the community. What it means to them. [During Alumnae Days people from various eras shared stories of their times at C.A.] So it would seem to me that this opportunity that was given to students is just, is all part of the history. So to me it makes a <u>great</u> difference that that happened, even if maybe kids can't necessarily see that.

I asked him if the story were on people's minds and he replied:

> No, not at all. No. But if you have a sense of history . . . I feel very strongly that for Concord Academy to flourish, that in addition to the great respect for the individual we emphasize, that we need to respect the institution itself equally. And that that's very vital and that sometimes people think the institution is irrelevant. I think it's incredibly important. And so that's one way to do it, is to know that and remember it and then perhaps talk about it with others.

I ask if he thinks girls sitting here now in the chapel ever think of the role of women in the early chapel days. Surprisingly he says, "You know, I think it probably <u>never</u> occurs to them."

Sylvia Mendenhall, English Teacher. Another longtime faculty member, Sylvia Mendenhall, on the other hand, started off her discussion with me by recounting the earliest days of the chapel in wonderful detail. In her view, those early beginnings still have some presence in the school. I asked her if she thought the early stories lived on in people's minds, referring specifically to both faculty and students. She replied:

> I think it does a bit. And usually, once every couple of years, somebody retells the story of the building of the chapel, usually with a few different details

> confused . . . But, yes, I do think it does make a difference. I think the chapel, in a funny way, is a very important part of the past and that everybody who is here at the school, I think, feels a kind of investment in that building, in part because it wasn't just there or built by a wealthy alumnus or something of that kind. But it was a kind of group project. I think that's part of the reason that the kids feel this freedom . . .

She mentioned, too, that she thought some students were more conscious of it than others, because of having relatives who had gone to C.A., like mothers or aunts. When she said this, I had serious doubts that she could be right, but I soon discovered that this was so.

Students: Relatives and Tours

Several students I spoke with were highly conscious of the early stories about the chapel, in large part because their own relatives, or their friend's relatives had been there and been involved. Others specifically mentioned remembering hearing the story about the building move and the carving when they first came to Concord on a tour. As one student mentioned, "I remember on my tour here someone told me that the faculty and the students had put the chapel actually back together here. And that <u>really</u> impressed me." I soon learn that retelling the story of the chapel's dismantling and reconstruction, together with the story about the carving is a regular feature of tours for visiting families, and that student tour guides as well as Admissions Office staff are the ones who most often tell these stories.

Sharon Bergman, Senior, C.A. '92

I asked one senior, Sharon Bergman, "Do you think it matters to you about it being taken down and put back up and kids working on the carving and all that?" She answers:

> Oh definitely! Definitely! It makes so much of a difference. It's like . . . the whole idea of this whole building being brought down, I mean, literally board by board from New Hampshire. I just love it. I love the idea of it. I love the whole thought of somebody, like a child, bringing it down and reconstructing it. And the plaque, I mean, the story about how the plaque was carved. You know, I've told that story because I think it has such a message about how they started with each girl carving her own line and it looked really skewed. So they gave each

girl an individual letter and all of the individual pieces formed this beautiful plaque. I just love that.

And I mean, all the carvings. I mean, do you ever look at the carvings? There are mice, and chameleons, and fish . . . this whole thing. And that it was all carved by students — this whole thing. I just love that. There's the power. There's so much power in just the physical presence . . . I mean, there's a lot to be said for the idea that a building or an object is just a building or an object, and it's people who invest it with whatever. But I don't think that's a hundred percent true. I mean . . . I look around the building and I think of people who put it together. And that's so . . . that's empowering! . . . To think of, what, 56 students and the headmaster* of a girls' school, schlepping an entire building from state to state. I mean . . . that's wonderful! Taking it apart and bringing it down and putting it back together. And sanding it and oiling it, nailing and painting and plastering it and everything else.

I think, see this is what I think. I think that students . . . I mean, the maintenance people do the repairs on the chapel now. I think students should do that. I don't think they should . . . Not that I don't think they should let the maintenance people do it, but I think that it would be a nice tradition to carry on to let the students be solely responsible for the upkeep of the chapel . . . for cleaning it, for making the repairs, for whatever . . . Cause you know, you get a good feeling when you've made something like that, built something. . . . This is sort of like an enduring monument to somebody else's blood, sweat, and tears . . . I mean, this is an enduring testament to the love of a buncha people for this institution.

I love everything about it. You know? I love the fact that they did it. I love the fact that they, like, uprooted it from the woods of New Hampshire to bring it here. I love the fact that it was all women who did it. I mean, especially in that day and age. That must have been scandalous.

Like some of the women I spoke with earlier, Sharon went on to relate the role of women in the chapel to her own situation, being heavily involved with the set-making and technical part of theater at C.A. I told her a little about the story of Mrs. Hall and Miss Young working on Miss Young's house before they moved the chapel, and how derisively they were treated by men on the scene. She commented that it was the same now for her.

> Nothing's changed. I mean, I've been doing theater tech at this school for three years. And by this point, as I'm a Senior about to graduate, I know the most about how the place works. And guys come in to do tech for a show and to be on the tech crew and they think that just because it requires manual labor, they were born knowing how. And they take, like, forty-five minutes to complete a three minute task, trying to figure out how the damned thing works, instead of asking, "Excuse me, how do I do this?"

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* From what Sharon said later, her use of "headmaster" here was clearly a slip of the toungue.

She goes on the recount how even the faculty member who trained her defers to the boys.

> I started working in tech and he started training me. He trained me and trained me and trained me . . . and trained me and trained me. And then, if there were ever guys around and, it was like, there were five of us and there were four people needed for a job, no matter how, even if I was the most experienced of all the people there, he would always ask four guys. And I would ride him constantly about it. I'd say, "What are you thinking?"
>
> I mean, I think that I, cause previous to this it had been mostly men in tech, at Concord, since, cause theater's only, what, fifteen, twenty years old. So theater's been around about as long as we have had boys. So the school obviously railroaded boys into doing tech. And so that's kind of been traditional. I mean, we've had male directors since, you know, the dawn of time.

So the chapel and its early relationship to women brings up the issue of how women are treated when they venture into previously male domains, in one case for an editor, in another for a science teacher, and now for a theater person. What women are presumed to do, allowed to do, seen as appropriate to do, links these women over several generations.

Summing Up: Who Remembers & Cares & So What?

Men Reluctant to Work with Women, Then & Now.

Mrs. Hall's Example. It is no accident that women working on the construction of buildings throws into bold relief the question of what women are allowed and encouraged to do, precisely because women are usually so absent from construction. For women to have found this chapel and to have dismantled and reconstructed it was then, and would be now, entirely unexpected. In Mrs. Hall's account of the chapel project she writes:

> I had dreaded the time when we would become conspicuous, when we would have to work in full view of visitors to the Academy, when I would need the help of men who clearly thought I was crazy. But a spirit began to pervade the venture which infected all who got involved with it. . . . Perhaps it was a sense of sharing adventure, entering into a conspiracy, or the fun of doing something a bit irregular. (Hall, 1962, p. 14)

She describes how contractor Casper Jenney "persuaded Fred Bishop, carpenter, to overcome his reluctance about working with women, and Fred stayed on until we got the

last piece from Barnstead back in place again." Persistence, imagination, hard work, and good humor, despite the odds. And, as one alumna noted, "It was important that it wasn't a scrub job." Small wonder that it inspires and excites many of the women who learn about it.

Women Now in Building Trades and Architecture. In upstate New York is a small all-women's construction company that was documented in the video, "Building Lives," where the women involved speak first-hand about their experience. One notes how working on buildings is exciting for women, "because we don't usually get to work on anything this big." Women traditionally and typically might do interior decorating, or design and sew quilts and clothing, but nothing even close to the scale of a building. She goes on to recount how, even when she ran her own construction company, people approaching a building site always assumed a male was in charge. Not only would they approach a man first but they would act as if she were not even present, as if she were invisible.

Sadly enough, I have heard this same complaint from women teaching in architecture schools. Even the most prestigious women, at the most prestigious schools, can feel intentionally marginalized and ignored. One woman who is a full professor in a west coast architecture school recently told me that she was happy when one of her male colleagues rudely rebutted her in a faculty meeting. She considered this a victory because at least she was acknowledged. Her usual treatment was to be allowed to speak and then consistently to be ignored, the meeting continuing as if nothing had been said. So, for Mrs. Hall, Miss Young, Molly Gregory, Belinda Burley, and a whole raft of girls who were students at Concord Academy to have pulled this chapel off, and for the result to be a beautiful, simple, heart-warming building was and is no small feat. Many women feel the victory and hold it dear.

Men: Mostly No Stake in the Early Story. In my limited experience, the early story and its import seem much less present for men than women. For male students and

alumni there is the obvious fact that their arrival at Concord Academy was not until 1971, considerably after the chapel's whole reconstruction period. In addition, most male faculty arrived after Mrs. Hall had gone and well after the chapel move. But I think also that putting buildings up and taking them down does not seem so remarkable to men or boys. They consider building construction normal and can easily imagine doing it. Not so for women. So it might not strike men as so extraordinary that the chapel was done, in the first place, or, in the second place, that mostly women did it.

Talking with males at C.A., especially those recently arrived, some never mentioned the early history at all. When I brought the topic up and asked if the early story and move mattered to them, several males said, "No." Others, mostly longtime faculty members already quoted here or students personally related to those first carvers and builders, think readily of the chapel's beginnings at Concord and hold those stories dear.

Many Women Feel Personally Connected. By contrast, the women I spoke with almost all mentioned it. Several said they were not sure how important or present the story was for others, but that it certainly was for them, personally. Some mentioned it as underscoring community effort and community identity. Others saw it as emblematic of commitment and caring. Some called it a gift. Mrs. Hall herself, said, "We put ourselves into that building, though. We put it back together with so much love and caring and hard work that went into it." Talking about the early chapel move and women's involvement, several women got suddenly sparkly eyed and playful, chuckling conspiratorially. Those who have been in similar settings of exclusion appreciate full well the import of those intrepid early adventurers, sneaking an entire building onto the formal, well mown, carefully tended lawn of Concord Academy. It comes as no surprise that many women would be inspired and delighted by those early stories and would especially revel in the fact that it was mostly women and girls who pulled it all off. Should we be surprised if many men dismiss it? More surprising to me is that even young women recently arrived at Concord know the story well and cherish it. More surprising, too, is how important the story is to

some men and how fully some men embrace the model and the forthright, undaunted spirit of Mrs. Hall.

What About the School at Large? Seeing that some remembered and cared about these early stories much more than others, I wondered about the rest of the school. So on several occasions I asked larger groups at C.A. whether they knew the story of the chapel's dismantling, reconstruction, and carving. Once I addressed a group of forty or so in the chapel — mostly first and second year students and some faculty. I was surprised that most said they did not know the story, so I recounted a lot of it for them.

Later giving a school chapel, I asked the whole school the same question. Asking those who knew the stories to stand, I was more heartened to see that about half the school stood. Hoping to link people through the chapel's stories, I urged those who knew the story to get together with those who did not. I also met with a drawing class that had drawn the chapel interior. The class included students of all ages. Forewarned that they were not easy to get talking, I used various interactive techniques to engage them. Then, worried about intimidating them, I did not tape the session, but relied instead on newsprint and notes.

To my delight, they leaped right in and were highly engaged and talkative the whole time. Not unexpectedly, their focus was on senior chapels. The only note from that session with any mention of the chapel having been taken down and reassembled is as follows:

> One kid [a boy, I remember], says he doesn't really think about the fact that it was taken down and reconstructed much (or at all) because what he has experienced there takes precedence for him — is much more real and present — so he thinks of memories of his experience . . . and the windows.

Words students associated with the chapel included seniors, safety, trust, secrets. I was taken aback when one student said "life and death." They focused on the intimacy and intensity of chapels now, not on the stories of dismantling or carving. Some sophomores expressed being somewhat bored by chapels. Seniors responded by leaping

to their own defense with, "How could you say that?!" One sophomore explained, "It's just that after a while you know what to expect and so it doesn't seem so special." Other students and faculty I had spoken with had said the same,

> Every chapel's different. I mean some are like . . . some follow this guideline of, like, you know, my family, my time at C.A., my summer experience, whatever. And you sort of block some of that out 'cuz you're like, "Yeah, I've seen that shit." But there are others that really stick with you. (Noah Fisk, as a senior, '93)

I met with another student, Josh Cramer (CA '92), who was good friends with a student whose aunt and mother worked on the building and carving as students, so Josh was well acquainted with the stories of the chapel move. Still, he said he almost never thought about them. With him, too, what happened now took precedence. To make his point, Josh handed me a copy of his chapel talk and said, "Read the first few lines." It starts, "Wake up and listen up. This is my time." Not unexpectedly, these students underscored that personal, direct experience largely defines each one's sense of reality and of what matters.

One time I was surprised to overhear a young male staff person talking with another about Mrs. Hall. He began by saying that he had only met her twice. Suddenly I was embarrassed because I felt as if I were eavesdropping, even though I overheard this quite by accident. Still, now I was eager to see what would follow, when he continued by saying, "She was the most egotistical, aggressive, spoiled, and opinionated person I have ever met!" I was stunned. "What?" I thought. "Who is this? What's he talking about?"

Then I began to think, hmm, maybe that is how some men see strong women — too much of a threat perhaps? Later reflection and the experience of my own 30th C.A. reunion reminded me that Mrs. Hall was intimidating for some. Larger than life, frank, outspoken, and strong, she conveys exceptional presence that for some people can be overwhelming. Yet her clarity and strength are tempered by wit, wry humor, a genuine concern for other people and their lives, and a captivating ability to tell a story.

Portraits of Key Players. As this study progressed, I compared these hastily overheard comments to all I was coming to know of these women as human beings and extraordinary teachers and models. I was overcome with the desire to share who these remarkable women were and was delighted when Tom Wilcox expressed a similar impulse. After giving a chapel of my own in the chapel, when the talk was over and the building was nearly empty again, two alumnae friends and I stood talking when Tom approached to talk. He explained how he was struck that the school's official portrait of Mrs. Hall, hung prominently in the Student/Faculty Center, missed entirely this feisty, hands-on, just-do-it quality of hers connected with the chapel move and rebuilding.

Her portrait showed a tall, serious figure, proper and imperious, dressed in a tailored woman's business suit. Tom proposed that we three find a more apt photograph to install of Mrs. Hall. What about one he remembered of her in a work shirt, tousled and grinning, wielding a hammer on the chapel roof? Could we search for it? Bemused, but enthusiastic, we agreed to the task, provided it come after this paper, not before. A similar picture appears on the next page (figure 8.11).

I was heartened that Tom recognized the difference between the "official" Mrs. Hall and the playful, irreverent, builder and storyteller we knew. I was delighted that he wanted to set the record straight and keep alive an awareness of Mrs. Hall's spunk, her just-do-it spirit, and her undaunted example of what a woman could be and do. And he wanted to let everyone know what a woman running a school for girls could be all about. Not just any woman, but this particular, not-to-be-soon-forgotten woman, Elizabeth B. Hall. So we were invited to help reconstruct and reinvent a pivotal piece of Concord Academy's history.

Describing the chapel being moved or in use without telling about the people involved would give only part of the story. Part of my task should be conveying a sense of Mrs. Hall and Molly Gregory as people and educators — warm, humorous, engaging spirits who imbued part of their spirit into the chapel and the Concord Academy of their time.

Giving even a partial glimpse of Molly, Mrs. Hall, and other exceptional people I encountered on this journey should make a few more pieces of the puzzle fit. Their strength of character and clarity of purpose are embedded in the chapel as surely as letters carved out of wood leave their indellible mark.

Figure 8.11. Mrs. Hall Swaps Gavel for Hammer

CHAPTER 9

NARRATIVE AS A MODE

"Stories at large help us see each other, value place,
and search for power in our lives."
— Carol Witherell & Nell Noddings, 1991

Finding Our Own Voices & Claiming Our Identity

Voice, Identity & Power

Finding your own voice, speaking your own truth, our own truths, telling our own stories, these are not just another characteristic associated with people and places, but are central to identity and to power. When I think of empowerment, I think immediately of voice, of naming one's own reality, validating one's personal experience and perspective, of speaking one's truth and of being listened to, individually and collectively. I think of the chapel. The centrality and import associated with chapels as personal stories make "voice" a bedrock concern of the community. Voice is not just part of the foundation of the school; it is the firm rock on which the foundation itself rests.

Beyond Setha Low's categories where narrative becomes one way people and place are bound up with one another, stories and their telling and retelling, their sharing, are at the heart of both individual and collective identity. I know who I am in part because I say who I am, both to myself and to others. I tell the story of who I am, and so do you. So do we. Together we create who we are. Clare Nunes, an English teacher at the school, in talking about the chapel says, "whatever it is, I think it's sacred to Concord Academy. And I think the chapel strikes about as close to the bone as you can get." Chapels hit home. Chapels are home — just like stories. I submit that chapels hit home in large part because they are about people's own stories.

Narrative Gains Stature

Stories and narrative are gaining attention as ways of knowing and learning (Barone, 1992; Belenky et al., 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1987, 1988, 1990; Coles, 1989; Danto, 1985; Eisner, 1976, 1986, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Hardy, 1975; Heilbrun, 1988; Kozulin, 1988; Leitch, 1986; Mailer, 1968; McLaren, 1986, 1989; Mitchell, 1980; Noddings & Witherell, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988; Robbins, 1991; Sarbin, 1986; Sellito, 1991; Stone 1988; Terkel, 1972, 1980,1984, 1988; Wigginton, 1985) They have the advantage of validating individual and episodic experience, honoring the specific perspective and insights of the storyteller, and casting knowledge in a highly personal voice and guise. Stories let more people in on telling what happened and articulating what matters to them. Stories are a way of democratizing knowledge and education. Anthropology professor Kirin Narayan writes:

> If game, drama, and text were analogies guiding theory in many disciplines through the 1960s and 1970s (Geertz, 1983), narrative has been central to the 1980s. Whether viewed as a syntagmatic arrangement of concepts or as actual discourse, narrative has colonized territory in a number of fields. Though clearly sweeping in behind the vanguard of the "text" analogy, the use of narrative instead of text emphasizes the subjectivity of active agents and the negotiated unfolding of events. That narrative is a means of making sense of one's own and others' experience has been recurrently argued by theologians (Crites, 1971; Goldberg, 1982; Hoffman, 1986); psychologists (J. Bruner, 1986, 1987; Coles, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1988; Schafer, 1983); philosophers (MacIntyre, 1981; Ricoeur, 1984); historians (Clifford, 1986; Mink, 1978; White, 1973, 1981); and anthropologists (E. Bruner, 1986; R. Rosaldo, 1989) — to cite only a prominent selection of authors and publications. Most generally, these theorists agree that the progression of events in narrative captures the dimension of time in lived experience. By arranging the flux and welter of experience around a narrative line, we make sense of our pasts, plan for our futures, and comprehend the lives of others. (in Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 113-114)

Stories as a way of knowing challenge and unsettle the comfortable positivist. Narrative ways of knowing are compatible with existential psychology and phenomenology. In the case of existential psychology, a preoccupation with identity is coupled with a focus on direct experience, and learning through what happens to you, individually, personally, and particularly. With a starting point and building blocks of subjective experience, phenomenology serves as the philosophic underpinning of

existential psychology (Maslow, 1968). Abraham Maslow (1968) writes that European phenomenologists:

> can teach us that the best way of understanding another human being . . . is to get into his [sic] Weltanschauung and to be able to see his world through his eyes. Of course such a conclusion is rough on any positivistic philosophy of science.

So, as positivism comes under fire from those more interested in inclusion, equity, and voice, we should not be surprised to see narrative ways of knowing gain momentum.

Individual & Community Identity

At the same time as stories allow multiple voices to be heard, they are also a means for gathering people in community, helping to define and cement community identity and common values. Through stories individual and group identities become intricately linked, overlapping, interpenetrating, and mirroring each other. Thinking about how our identity is bound up with stories, one author writes:

> Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories we tell or hear told, those that we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves in an episodic, somewhat semiconscious, but virtually uninterrupted monologue. We live immersed in narrative. (Brooks, 1991)

Stories Embedded in Social Context

In countless ways our individual and collective identities are intertwined with, articulated by, and understood through the stories we learn, we tell, we create and perpetuate. Furthermore, our stories are not divorced from our own times, just as our identities are partly entwined in the larger sociopolitical context of our lives. Sometimes, though, it takes a while for us to realize those interconnections and to adjust our stories and our understanding of our own lives to reflect the larger context in which we find ourselves. In his article, "The Politics of Storytelling," William Kittredge writes:

> Many of us . . . lose track of the story of ourselves, the story that tells us who we are supposed to be, and how we are supposed to act. . . . Late in the night we listen to our own breathing in the dark, and rework our stories.

> We do it again the next morning, and all day long, before the looking-glass of ourselves, reinventing reasons for our lives.
>
> We figure and find stories, which can be thought of as maps or paradigms in which we see our purposes defined, then the world drifts and our maps don't work any more, our paradigms and stories fail, and we have to reinvent our understandings, and our reasons for doing things. Useful stories, I think, are radical in that they help us see freshly. They are like mirrors, in which we see ourselves reflected. That's what stories are for, to help us see for ourselves as we go about the continual business of reimagining ourselves. (Kittredge, 1992, p. 25)

Just so the moralistic, anecdotal, fable-like stories in the chapel's early days at Concord reflected both individual and community identity of the late '50s and early '60s. There was a certain confidence in knowledge gained by elders, a respect for careful reflection, and a presumption that learning was partly about sharing values — that growing up was in part learning about and accommodating community values, and in part asserting one's individuality. It seemed that becoming an adult was forging individual identity and freedom within a context of responsibilities and values held in common. It was about becoming different, but also about fitting in. There was still a modicum of confidence in our ability, as human beings, to know and to deal effectively in this world.

By the late '60s and '70s, that sense of wholeness and confidence was seriously eroded. Beset with doubt about the Vietnam War, alarmed at nuclear proliferation and decrying materialism, many young people, in particular, felt increasingly alienated from adults and from the dominant values of society. Dissent and disenchantment swept the land.

All this was reflected in the chapel and the stories told there. Enter the period of non-chapels, or of chapels designed principally to shock or outrage. This was also the period of chapels that flouted the rules, from beer cans on the rafters to "Come on Baby Light My Fire" blasting its lyrics to an unwitting audience. It was a time of critique. Students judged society and society judged students. Students tried consciously to shock and outrage, and society felt shocked and outraged. Sometimes the generations seemed to be speaking entirely different languages. In chapel students sang "Puff the Magic Dragon,"

tongue in cheek, chuckling at the allusion to smoking pot, while many of the adults joined lustily in, thinking of the nursery-rhyme quality of the story of a boy and his imaginary dragon.

Then, as the '80s became more introspective, more psychologically probing, and more collectively confessional, so too the chapels. Public intimacy on talk shows was mirrored by the intimate disclosures revealed in chapels — harrowing, traumatic, yet presumed to be cathartic somehow. Remembering some of these now, people speak in whispers, with furrowed brows and pained expressions. They readily recognize that chapels revealing great personal and family tragedies can be painful and exhausting, particularly in rapid succession, experienced by captive, collective audiences.

And now the '90s, sometimes more mellow and less strident, and at other times more integrative of the personal and the political. Chapels in the '90s are often more open about social oppression and social identity. To suffer a social oppression becomes almost a badge of honor. Subjects once furtively whispered are now openly discussed. The term "politically correct" comes to be associated with being tolerant and inclusive, except of those whose political views are not tolerant and inclusive — a kind of oxymoron. Political correctness, championing diversity, is attacked for being exclusive and intolerant. Acceptance and lack of judgment are the watchwords of the day. People's values are valued simply because they hold them. Moral judgments are considered arbitrary impositions best omitted altogether. A kind of laissez-faire morality pervades. This time is nothing if not diverse and self-conscious. A lot of energy goes into trying to figure out what it means to be self-consciously, intentionally diverse and open and articulate about oppressions of all sorts, from homophobia to sexism, racism, classism, and religious or cultural intolerance.

The Nature of Narrative

Dialogue vs. Narrative

In each of these eras, the chapel has stood as a forum for storytelling, for personally sharing who and what we are, as individuals in collective forum. Narrative becomes a vehicle for individual development and for community growth and articulation. In Paulo Freire's work on liberation and empowerment, dialogue is a central means toward freedom and community. Dialogue is a vehicle through which oppressed people find and share their own voices. Through dialogue people can come together to name and reflect on their own reality, and to critique and demystify their sociopolitical context and unique historical moment.

At Concord, diverse opinions abound and dialogue runs rampant into dissent. Concord Academy seems to pride itself on having as many differing opinions as there are people. The school thrives on the constant interplay of differences and babble of disagreement. Amidst this cacophony, the chapel becomes a welcome respite of suspended judgment and of one voice rather than many. One voice honored as the community comes together as a whole, accepts the chapel-giver and the chapel as a whole, attends as a single, focused body. The individual is honored and supported by the community. C.A. Admissions Administrator, Linda Whitlock, expressed the complementary relationship between individuality and community this way:

> . . . we try hard to be a community which pays attention to the individual. So again, it's that duality. We think that community can't exist without strong individuals within it. But at the same time, individuals really can't be strong and absolutely free to choose unless they have the support of a strong community . . . which gives them support, identity, affiliation, affection, respect, and all those things.

Later she added:

> It can get easy for us to become overwhelmed by a fair amount of cynicism in trying to figure out what is the community and what's at the center of our community, because we do have such strong individuals and because we do value vibrant, vocal, engaged individuals, as students and as faculty. So there have to be equally strong pulls toward the community. There are different

> times when we are more aware of what might be pulling us apart than what binds us together. But going into the chapel three mornings a week, I think for every member of the community, it's a community-building time.

So while the larger context of Concord Academy is filled with ready disagreement and a rush to voice one's own opinion and establish one's own position on whatever issue, these are displaced by acceptance and suspended judgment in the chapel. Community supports individuality and in doing this through collective listening, through honoring individual, personal stories, builds a caring, supportive, empathetic community. As another faculty member, Katy Rea Schmitt, said, "When you're in the chapel, you're all one and there's just no question about it. You are one community."

Still, dialogue has often been touted as vital to discourse and would seem to be pivotal to the kind of intellectually eager, continuously contested terrain that is the daily bread of Concord Academy. Yet, while dialogue may play a critical role at the school, in the chapel narrative prevails as a vital first step. Some see the development of one's own voice and telling of one's own story as a precondition for true dialogue, especially when people are in unequal power positions, as students are relative to teachers. Others see narrative and dialogue as mutually reinforcing, operating in tandem.

Stories, Authorship, & Selfhood

Nancy Witherell and Nell Noddings have edited a collection of essays in their critical book Stories Lives Tell (1991), where they explore the special attributes of narrative as a way of knowing and of coming into one's own. Telling one's own story can be pivotal to inventing and reinventing oneself — asking oneself who one "really" is and making up the answer. In adolescence, in particular, this challenge appears with extra vigor and predictable regularity. "Who am I?" stories are especially suited to young people struggling to understand and assert just who they are. Authoring one's own story, narrating the events of one's life is to make sense of them, to validate them, to find and make meaning of them (Belenky et al., 1986; ; Cooper, 1991; Tappan & Brown, 1991;

White, 1981; Witherell, 1991). Conceiving and telling one's own story is deemed critical to developing a sense of authenticity and of self — the first step in gaining the confidence and grounding for entering into dialogue with another. Joanne Cooper's "Telling Our Own Stories," speaks directly to this point. For her, journal writing is the narrative form, as for others it can be telling one's story either in writing or orally, or both.

> Students . . . struggle with decisions to agree with, acquiesce to, reject, or alter the messages society sends them about how they are to act and think. Students can use journal writing to facilitate finding their voice, a voice needed before any kind of dialogue can ever take place between them and their culture. Without a voice of their own, students are simply dictated to. No real dialogue can take place without the presence of two true voices. (Cooper, 1991, p. 109)

At Concord, a primary narrative opportunity is to give a chapel. Chapels challenge students to consider who they are, to arrange the telling of who they are or what they care about in a way that can be conveyed to others. The choices they make about what to say and how to say it reveal not just the facts, but a host of details about their values and how they make and find meaning in their lives and world.

Modeling for Budding Speakers

Hearing chapels, too, confirms that the community honors individual voices and individual differences, so in hearing chapels and seeing them modeled, students naturally start working at piecing together their own stories. Many say they started thinking about their own chapels from the moment they first experienced a chapel. So powerful is this rite of passage as a model, so captivating and evocative, that it is hard not to immediately project oneself into the role of speaker. In fact, this was especially apparent to me one day when I was driving back from the chapel with my younger son, Adam who was not a C.A. student. Adam was returning home with me after having been to his older brother's chapel. Adam had seemed pensive and especially quiet for quite some time during the ride. When he did finally speak, it was to say, "I wonder what I'd say in my chapel." Thinking about it, conjuring it up, concocting his own story then and there. Not a C.A.

student, not in line to give a chapel, but caught up in the magic and power of it nevertheless, and personally engaged.

Sometimes when the chapel was empty, or almost empty, I would see a student come into the chapel and at some point go up and stand at the podium, stretch out his or her arms to grasp the supportive podium rail, and look penetratingly out at an imaginary audience, surveying the empty pews, the balcony above, the windows, the rafters, the whole thing — wondering, imagining, one day giving one's own chapel. Or so I suspected.

Stories as a Means Toward Embracing Differences

Personal life stories are also a powerful avenue toward accepting and even celebrating differences among people. "Ism's" are personalized — from classism to racism, ageism, or sexism. Names and faces and descriptions of people's own concrete experiences take others out of the realm of the hypothetical and the doctrinaire. What might have seemed empty and strident ideology is supplanted by moving personal narrative, making it transferable and "real." Empathy and connection abound. As Noddings and Witherell note in the introduction to their book:

> Through telling, writing, reading, and listening to life stories — one's own and others' — those engaged in this work can penetrate cultural barriers, discover the power of self and the integrity of the other, and deepen their understanding of their respective histories and possibilities. (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, pp. 3-4)

Stories As Counter-Hegemonic

In Noddings and Witherell's collection, Lyn Mikel Brown and Mark B. Tappan authored a chapter titled, "Stories Told and Lessons Learned: Toward a narrative approach to moral development and moral education" (1991). They are interested in a narrative approach to moral development that validates student voices and perspectives and that offers the possibility of countering the hegemony of the times. For Brown and Tappan, embracing narrative in education is intentionally poststructuralist and

post-modern, challenging the cognitive, structuralism paradigm that they see as having dominated developmental moral education for two decades. They offer an radically different concept of how psychology and education could interrelate, particularly when the objective is transformation rather than accommodation. As Tappan and Brown put it:

> This vision, still in its nascent form, seeks to use education less to facilitate development along a hierarchical progression of structurally defined stages and more to enable each student to resist and overcome social and cultural repression, and hence to authorize his or her own moral voice. (Brown & Tappan, 1991, p. 188)

Young people have the opportunity to re-envision society, through fresh perspectives and tremendous energy and will to establish their own individual and collective identities. The intent is not to have young people fit into society, but to challenge the status quo and supplant it. In this approach, the function of education is not to maintain society but to "remake and reform" it. In closing, they note:

> It is our hope . . . that by listening to the voices of children and adolescents as they tell their own stories, educators and/or researchers will come to appreciate how powerfully educative and truly liberating such an experience can be. (Brown & Tappan, 1991, p. 188)

Stories as Resistance

Stories have a long history of offering voice to those whose voices are most marginalized or intentionally suppressed in society. Think of the role of spirituals in the South and how song harbors and hands down stories and supports resistance. Whitney Otto's novel, How to Make an American Quilt (1991) describes quilt making as subversive storytelling, as preservation of untold stories, the unacknowledged history of people whose stories were not considered worthy of official record, whose names have not been written in books of history, the very tomes that purport to tell the whole story. "The nineteenth century brought an explosion of ideas to the concept of the quilt, of a woman's political voice" (Otto, 1991, p. 12). She notes how women of the time could not vote, though they had no less desire to, and placed no less personal importance on national events. She exhorts them to "Save your opinions for your quilt. Put your heart and voice

into it. Cast your ballot; express your feelings regarding industrialization, emancipation, women's suffrage, your love of family."

She distinguishes between the decorative quilt and the story quilt:

> And do not forget the popular magazines like *Peterson's* or *Godey's Lady's Book*, which encourage the decorative quilt over the story quilt (the quilt with a voice), as it can safely be displayed outside the bedroom without offense. Place it in the parlor. Simply to work a pattern and color with no ulterior thought is the mark of a woman of leisure and reflects well on her husband.
>
> You want to keep these things in mind: history and family. How they are often inseparable. In the twentieth century you may feel that all those things that went before have little to do with you, that you are made immune to the past by the present day: All those dead people and conflicts and ideas — why they were only stories we tell one another. History and politics and conflict and rebellion and family and betrayal. Think about it. (Otto, 1991, p. 12-14)

Otto's entire novel (for it is a novel) unveils the making of quilts as the weaving of stories, some more overtly politically intended than others, and some with an explicit "underground" taxonomy. Besides the literal quilt-making, Otto uses quilting as a metaphor for emancipation, resistance, and finding voice. To make a quilt is to find and tell your own story. Later, in the novel, she writes:

> You hold no stock in the prefab, purchased-pattern quilt. You do not understand the point of stitching without your own heart-involvement. Without your ideas incorporated into the work, it is just an exercise, something to fill the long evening spent without companionship.
>
> More things you know:
>
> That only you can tell your story. (Otto, 1991, p. 169)
>
> I refused, at an early age, to be a specter in my own world. I decided that I would not be whisked away, so I sought to anchor myself to society, to make them see *me* , Anna Neale, child of a black mother (deceased) and a white father (whereabouts unknown and unacknowledged); gave birth to one child, my daughter, Marianna Neale; became undisputed leader and founder of the Grasse Quilting Circle (recognized nationally for superior and original work). Of course I know that outside of the quilting world, the Grasse women remain unknown. But I am not invisible because of this closed circle; I am not unknown. I learned to speak with needle and thread long before society finally "gave" me a voice — as if society can give anyone a voice; it can only take a voice away. (Otto, 1991, p. 174-175)

Voice, a recurring theme for claiming one's place in the world. Mary Murray Coleman, C.A. Administrator, talked about one of her advisees, saying:

> . . . she said to me last fall, "I really want to be able to stand up in the chapel and say what I have gained at Concord is confidence." And she said, "I'm getting closer." That's what she wants to talk about. That's what's important to her. This is a very bright, really bright, extraordinarily bright young woman, who has not a clue yet — she will, she's getting there — of how bright she is. But what's important for her (Work is easy for her. She just sails through. She reads it once and . . .) but it's absorbing and being . . . finding her own voice. And she wants to find that voice as she moves to give her chapel talk.

Voice is central to identity. Who am I, in my own right, on my own terms? Not who am I as you have defined me, or as society sees or fails to see me, or refuses, even, to see me or to hear me. Voice lets the world know I am here, unique and real; speaking up and speaking out.

As the chapel offers that opportunity to students at Concord Academy, and as quilts became one vehicle for nineteenth century women (especially black women), quilts have been taken up again as a means of gaining voice and chronicling personal stories in the AIDS epidemic and the Names Project. Here quilts are made in memorial to individuals who have died of AIDS and these are joined together to form a huge series of connected quilts that would now cover acres and acres of land. It is so huge now that it will probably never again be displayed as a whole. Here, too, stories are told through quilts — making the invisible visible, creating a window for people who may have turned away to look through and see. People who may not have had personal involvement with AIDS, may never have known anyone with AIDS, can come into close personal contact with something intimate and touchable about those who have died of it. Quilts you can reach out and touch.

The medium of stories, or in this case stories through quilts, is particularly compelling in settings where there has been a powerful impulse to depersonalize the problem or the issue. I think of the bumper sticker that says, Fight AIDS, not People with AIDS. A lot of times people want to keep their distance, whether it's from a teenager with a blue mohawk haircut, a person of another race they pass on the sidewalk, an entire issue, like abortion, or a disease, like AIDS or leprosy.

But stories break through that depersonalized hands-off distance. Stories let you know there are people here, with dimension and depth and quirks and special favorite songs or T-shirts or jeans — with friends and families and personal triumphs and tragedies, large and small. Stories give you a way of meeting those people. People who are just like you or me in a lot of ways, and different in lots of ways, too. Stories let you connect, even when you might not have been intending to. Stories bridge chasms of unequal power and privilege. They let people see each other as human beings. Madeleine Grumet writes, "When there is one story, it becomes the story, my story, and when it is delivered to another, it arrives gift wrapped in transference" (Grumet, 1991, p. 72).

The Power of Narrative Demonstrated in the C.A. Chapel

Chapel Stories Affirm Individuality and Community

At Concord Academy, the educators need no convincing about the power and centrality of stories and of listening to students as they tell them. Three times every week, chapels reaffirm for the school the power of individuals, students and faculty alike, speaking in their own voices, about their own stories and issues, as they see them. C.A. Administrator Linda Whitlock noted, "It's through the vehicle, really, of one member of the community's revealing whatever he or she chooses to reveal. . . about self, that binds me even more tightly to the community." Later in our meeting she added, "It's a way of celebrating individuals, but at the same time of affirming the connection between those individuals and the community and the community's connection to that individual." Her thoughts are echoed by Sam Keen in "The Stories We Live By," 1988, where he writes:

> Stories open you up to the stories of others, as common and singular as your own. That remains the best way we storytelling animals have found to overcome loneliness, develop compassion and create community. Indeed, if the unique stories of individuals are not cherished, a group of people become a mass, or a collective, but never a healing community. (p. 46-47)

Collective witness, collective intimacy, the assurance of each one having a turn, if they so choose, affirming the value of each individual, and coming together to celebrate that person's own story, all powerfully combine to help bind individuals, one to another, in community. All work synergistically together to help create and cement meaning.

Chapel Stories Treasured as C.A.'s Heartbeat

That chapels as successive personal stories are tremendously valued at C.A. was brought home to me countless times throughout this study. It was made clear by what people said and by how they acted, both individually and as a whole community. The chapel is the closest thing to a heartbeat at Concord Academy, whose pulse is confirmed three times a week in morning chapel. Some days it may run smooth and steady, like crystal clear water gliding over rocks in a pool. Other days it may be racy and erratic, tense and troubled, signaling that all is not well beneath the surface. Then there are times when it is quiet, understated, needing the thickest of silences to be heard, spoken almost in a whisper, fog-bound. And some mornings it skips and leaps, cavorting, reveling in itself, deftly playing with words the way children run through fields dancing with the butterflies and blowing the feather-floating seeds of dandelions aloft.

So treasured and central is the chapel with its morning ritual, that people I spoke with called it "the personification of Concord Academy," or "more precious than any other building on campus, because of what its walls have heard." Time and again people said they were amazed the first time they came to a chapel. One senior said:

> I was just sort of at first astounded at the fact that uhh . . . what chapels <u>were</u>. These people . . . telling these stories which they normally wouldn't tell a crowded room, whereas they're telling 400 people, 350 people. And I was really excited from the get-go.

In time, that first enchantment and exuberance grow into reverence, solid and abiding. That same student later remarked:

> Last summer when I was interviewing for colleges and everything like that, they asked, 'Well, what are you looking forward to in your senior year?' And

> I'd say, you know, ummm, the classes I'm taking, da-da-da. And then I'd tell 'em about chapel.

Several adults at C.A. mentioned that before they were working at the school and had come to visit, it was experiencing a chapel that made the most powerful impression on them and was pivotal in convincing them that this was where they wanted to work. Administrator Joanne Hoffman said:

> When I came to C.A., looked at this job, before I was hired, I saw a chapel. . . . I remember my experience of that day was absolutely colored by the experience that I had in the chapel, which was a very (spoken reverently) positive one. I'll never forget this young man . . .who spoke about himself. And I had no idea what to expect. And it was wonderful and what he said was great. But more important to me was what everybody else was doing in the chapel, as he was speaking, because it said something about them, about the individual's place in the community and about the school's mission. . . .
>
> Everybody was sitting in absolute rapt attention. . . . The space is not big enough for us. We're all crowded into this place, sitting so closely that we really have to touch each other in a way that is symbolic. I didn't yet know C.A. . . . I'd seen publications, but that's not knowing any school. And so here nobody was saying a word . . . and this child was revealing some interesting things about himself. No one was rolling his or her eyes or elbowing his or her neighbor. . . . There was no criticism in the chapel of what was going on. There was absolute acceptance of this person's story. Talk about empowerment! It's just remarkable.
>
> And I went back to Connecticut and I said, "You wouldn't believe this ritual, this whole experience that knits this community together!" I'd known adolescents and been teaching and working with them for years and what astounded me was seeing the whole different way that students were treating each other. The chapel provided a reverent, respectful, eager, expectant moment. I couldn't believe that the community could sit together and listen to one individual and have it have such a powerful effect on the whole community. I went to lunch and people were still talking about the chapel. I went to classes and people were talking about it.

So, yes, from what people have told me and what I have experienced myself, my sense is that Concord Academy as a whole places tremendous value on the giving and receiving of stories, on hearing each other's voices, and on celebrating their ongoing right and delight in chapels. And the podium is not reserved just for the most knowledgeable or most eloquent. Every student, faculty, and administrative person who wishes to is offered the opportunity to have not just the floor, but the entire chapel.

Stories Multi-Dimensional & "Real": Another Way of Knowing

That people tell these stories up front, in person, in an intimate, touchable setting, makes all the difference. These are not cold, hard, disembodied facts orated from a distance and meant to sink into the quicksand of indelible memory for later recall and restatement. These are personal, connected, contextual, with the appearance, tone, nuance, inflection, and personal style each one brings to the telling. People become more alive to us, more richly textured and more multi-dimensional as we hear their stories first-hand. History does too.

The way stories can personalize history and prick us awake, too, is sometimes demonstrated in the chapel. Although most chapel talks are given by students or faculty, some are by invited guests, usually at Sunday evening Vespers as distinct from special morning chapel rituals. Linda Whitlock described a Sunday evening Vespers talk given in the chapel by a holocaust survivor:

> She spoke in the chapel. But of course. And it was 6:30, so it was after supper— a perfect time. And she told her powerful personal story. And it could be heard, then, in a way that a lecturer on the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s never would have been heard. And everybody just came away having been touched by her story, but by being able to see her as merely one of many. I mean, you know?
>
> You know, giving chapels, it's a personal story that each, that that speaker is giving. And the sharing, it's personal, whether it's of intellectual content, but it's still . . . that individual had some choice to make in whether to say anything, and then in deciding to say that. So that reveals something about that person. You know? So I'm, I'm attending to both. I'm attending to both who's saying it and what this might mean and I'm attending to what's being said.

The power of personal story brings history alive and home. First-hand narrative becomes a living antidote to the stale, remote sense students too often assume about history. As Andra Makler writes:

> Unfortunately for history teachers in high schools, most adolescents do not presume the existence of either story, motive, reason, or consequence in history. They come to class believing that history is dead certainty and/or meaningless lists of names, places, and dates. (1991, p. 29)

Another way of knowing, the "narrative mode" stands opposed to the "paradigmatic (or logico-scientific) mode" (Bruner, 1986) that has long dominated academia and the West. Bruner notes that:

> We . . . assumed that adults, as well as children, are natural storytellers, though they have often learned to suppress their urge to tell stories as evidence of knowing (or even experiencing) because of the dominant theory of knowledge as "objectivity and generalizability" within the academic world. (1986)

An Outsider's View of Chapel & Stories

It is not just those inside the C.A. community who respect and revere chapels. During this study I encountered the C.A. graduation speech of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a prominent author and educational thinker, author of the accclaimed book, The Good High School (1990). A former classmate of mine and C.A. alum whom I interviewed for this study had specifically recommended Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot's book as speaking to some of the very issues I was concerned with here. So, having had that connection and having read her book, I was delighted that she was to be the graduation speaker.

Still, I was completely surprised when Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, who had visited the school not long before that, focussed the entire first segment of her speech on the chapel. Having come to see the school, she had been taken to a chapel and been deeply impressed by the experience. To her, both the building and the experience of a student's chapel in the building were extraordinary and in an intense, concentrated way illustrated some of the best that education can embrace. At play here, for her, were intimacy, connection, and a powerful sense of community alongside an unquestionable respect for individuality — a celebration of each single person, each one's uniqueness, yet in community. Composing the story she would tell at graduation of her encounter with the chapel, I wonder if she realized she would speak facing the chapel as it anchors the space for C.A.'s graduation (figures 9.1 & 9.2).

Figure 9.1. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot Speaking at C.A. Graduation, 1992

Figure 9.2. C.A.'s Extended Family Gathers. Graduation, 1992

Stories Humanize Education & Create Community

Chapels embody and illustrate a fundamental respect for students as human beings and a recognition that their stories are part of the whole story too. Their experience matters. Eliot Wigginton, writing about his experience as a high school teacher, underscores how critical this fundamental stance is.

> To make our education effective, we must start with the real-world reality of our students' lives, be it centered around raccoons, ginseng, a little tavern, McDonald's, or a ghetto street — accept that, build on that, and broaden that. Otherwise we demean that reality, or negate it. We imply that nothing they've learned in their lives is valid or has relevance. We deny their past, deny their present, and proceed from the assumption that they're ignorant and deprived and that we must correct the situation or they're doomed.
>
> To bring our education and our lives together, we must know them better. (Wigginton, 1985, p. 222-223)

Welcoming and validating students' stories and identities, and faculty and administrators' personal stories transforms education into an encounter of human beings, conscious of and attuned to their mutual humanity. What results is an atmosphere of respect, trust, and connection. As Admissions Director, Mary Murray Coleman said of the chapel:

> I think it is, at its very best, at the heart of this place . . . because of the trust that is implied if you are allowed to speak in front of your classmates, your schoolmates, and teachers, and dorm parents, in any way you choose . . . recognizing that what you have to say may be painful to the whole community. And it can be . . . But one can dare to do that without fear of being labeled, accused.

Stories are a way to redress power imbalances. The teacher, who might usually be considered the primary speaker in a school, becomes the listener. The student, usually the attentive listener, speaks and the whole school attends. And the student speaks not just to pose a question or answer one, but to launch an entire story, be it about one's personal life, some pressing issue at the school or in the world at large, or simply thoughts and observations one may wish to share.

Not prescribing the topic validates the speaker's right to choose, demonstrating all the more faith in the speaker's ability and showing a willingness to stand by whatever the choice may be. It says each one matters. Each person matters and each choice matters. The details matter. The idiosyncrasies matter. The way your own experience and insight yield your very own view of the world matters to us here at Concord Academy.

We, as a school, and as individuals within the school value all of that, as we value you. And we welcome your story as a way of knowing in and about the world and of coming to know you better. And we value the process of coming together to hear each one of our own stories, silently, collectively, eagerly, first thing in the morning. It sets us on our way — reminds us who and what we are. It energizes us, focuses us, sometimes exhausts and exasperates us. It always connects us, even in cases when the connection is painful or abrasive. It is our most cherished way of knowing and being. It cements and grounds us, both individually and as a community, for that moment in time and space.

CHAPTER 10

INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT: SETTING THE STAGE

"I guess what I would like you to do is to, you know, it's always hard to put feelings down on paper . . . if you could somehow put the, the empowerment, the feeling, express it on paper (pause) . . . yeah."
— Noah Fisk, C.A. '93, interviewed for this study)

Overview of the Chapter

At last we come to empowerment, central to me at the outset and throughout this study, but sometimes seeming to emerge only tangentially. In this chapter I explore the concept of empowerment in several ways. First I consider the use of the term, what various participants mean by it and how comfortable or uncomfortable they are with it. I also discuss the term as used by several practitioners in fields as disparate as management science, psychology, and education. Fundamentally, however, I am more interested in whether empowerment happens and if it does happen what it is like, than I am in what people call it.

How does the chapel in action relate to empowerment — both as a building project and as the experience of giving and receiving chapels? What about the chapel as it reflects a philosophy of education and an approach to learning, which in turn has implications for empowerment? What does the chapel reveal about participants underlying assumptions about themselves and each other? What about people's underlying intentions as well?

Empowerment can be considered both at an individual level, thinking more of personal power, and at a community or societal level, where the term "empowerment" is more expected. The chapel can and will be explored as a focal point for both personal and community empowerment, with the special energy and tensions produced as these

two agendas and frames of reference coming together at one time in one place. Besides describing what goes on in chapels and through chapel projects, there will be an attempt to unravel some of the characteristics of empowerment. When you break empowerment down and look at some of its parts, what are they and how do they function? What seems to foster empowerment and what frustrate it? This should help us see why some settings and some approaches are more empowering than others. That, in turn, should give us some insight into the chapel and its effects.

This chapter is the first of three on empowerment. Here I lay the groundwork and then focus on personal and community empowerment largely in a psychological sense of self-consciousness, self-confidence, finding voice as an individual and encouraging voice as a community. Three parallel questions are how are individuals empowered, how are communities empowered, and how is the chapel an empowering setting.

What Is Empowerment Anyway?

"My word 'Empowerment'"

"**What's That?**" The careful reader will doubtless remember several times in a range of contexts when empowerment has already been explicitly mentioned by people inter- viewed for this study. For some, however, the term "empowerment" was neither usual nor comfortable. I remember phoning Mrs. Hall for this study to ask if I could come and talk with her, saying I was interested in empowerment in relation to the chapel. The term seemed to stump her for a moment — giving her pause. After a brief silence she said, "Empowerment — people feeling that they have something to say, that they are creative." I said, "Yes, and that they have efficacy, that they are effective in the world and capable."

Another time, she queried, "Empowerment? What's that?" (and after a brief pause) "Oh, I know, like when you empower a committee." Later some said, "To use your word

'empowerment'" or "It's not a word I tend to use." One Concord alumna and C.A. staff person, revealed her discomfort with the term, by saying, haltingly, as if not to disappoint me:

> That is kind of. . . I guess it's sort of, maybe. . .It might be that, as other people have said, it's not a word you use often enough. . . uh, you know, to associate it with more everyday places, or places that are close to you. You know, you think of empowerment as, I don't know . . . protesting or um, uh. . . maybe protesting for something and getting it. You know, that kind of thing. (Maria Lindberg (C.A. class of '81, Publications Dir. '92-'94)

C.A. as a Setting of Privilege. One can understand how a term like "empowerment" might not be current or comfortable for many people at Concord Academy. The concept of empowerment has gained more currency in the third-world in relation to overt oppression than it has in more highly technical, industrial or post-industrial settings. Those who presume superiority do not think they need to be freed from any bonds or "liberated."

At Concord Academy the term "empowerment" may not be prevalent in part because the setting begins with the presumption of privilege. Private secondary boarding schools hardly think of themselves as oppressed. They hardly imagine themselves needing or wanting to be empowered, in part because in relation to society they start from a position of power and presumed entitlement. Nevertheless, individuals within such institutions can find themselves in different positions relative to privilege, dominance, and hegemony. This is particularly true as once exclusive, private school settings becomes increasingly diverse in terms of class, ethnicity, race, religion, and sexual preference. Private schools are no longer the bastion of the wealthy, elite, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants they once cloistered. Yet even as such enclaves broaden their bases and open their doors, there is the sense of a dominant ethos and background of privilege and hegemony that, while it may not prevail, still resides.

Naturally this is less apparent to those in the position of privilege than to the newcomers. Whether from socio-economic class or religion, race or ethnicity, gender

or sexual identity, person after person can easily feel like an outsider being let in. They can easily feel that whatever separates them from the dominant identity leaves them with an awkward fit — acutely aware of their difference. In the sense that their own class, race, or other identity is seen as "different from" or "needing to adapt to" the dominant culture, they can easily feel oppressed by that dominance and devalued in light of it. This is all the more apparent if their own particular identity is both highly recognizable and in the distinct minority.

Race as an Example. Race is a case in point. In this private school setting White clearly dominates and is taken as the presumed, though unproclaimed, norm. Black is most readily identifiable and distinguishable from White, although Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and others would also be considered people of color. But Black and White contrast more starkly than the other racial differences. Beyond that, on the whole, racial differences are more visually striking than, for example, sexual preferences, religions, or ethnicity. With the latter, however, dramatic visual statements can be made to emphasize these identities. And here, when these less obvious identities are emphasized visually, observers often presume that the visual association is intentional and connotes stridency.

So, how does the chapel relate to all this? The chapel and, in particular, the giving of chapels offer powerful affirmations of identity, both in personal and in group terms. Giving a chapel is a primary opportunity for each senior and for those faculty members and administrators who choose it, to proclaim, announce, and etch out their personal and group identities. As we might expect for distinct and highly identifiable minorities, such as Blacks in this predominantly White environment, social identity (in this case race) often becomes the defining characteristic, or perhaps we should say the primary preoccupation. In describing people's chapels, several people I interviewed mentioned that Black students almost always talk about race in their chapels, and about Concord

Academy in relation to race. This is typical for Black faculty and administrators who choose to give chapels, as well. One faculty member commented about this as follows:

> Many of our Black students who give chapels are often very concerned over racist issues and often in a very uncomplimentary way as far as the school is concerned. I think how . . . you leave your own background and come into an environment such as Concord Academy. You have walked into a very different kind of place, which forces you to change, make some changes in you, uh. . . some of which you may not like, and which you are very willing to blame Concord Academy for. (Sylvia Mendenhall, English teacher)

For Blacks at Concord Academy, it seems, as for Black people in the United States, personal identity is intimately associated with social identity. The same may be said for homosexuals or Jews, where overt oppression has heightened their consciousness of social identity and made it largely inseparable from personal identity. Many would also say the same of women. In this private school setting of Concord Academy we could also say the same of people who are working class or poor.

Oppression Depends on Where You're Standing. But, while empowerment may be an issue at C.A. that surfaces in relation to questions of inclusion or exclusion and dominance or difference, the term "empowerment" may not readily surface. The issues may be understood and construed as particular only to the excluded or non-dominant group. So concerns about social identity and hegemony raised by Black students, Jewish students, or homosexuals, for example, would be thought of as "their" issues, rather than as questions of empowerment and oppression at Concord Academy. Concord thinks of itself as already liberated. Without elaborating more on this at present, let me just say that we will see that these questions are especially prominent for some students and faculty in some chapels. The chapel itself can become a whirlpool of opportunity in which these issues spin and are spun off.

Empowerment Variously Defined. In relation specifically to the chapel, I found that in talking with people, they ran the gamut from being at ease with the term "empowerment" to being befuddled by it. Some people talked about what I would call empowerment, without ever using the term. Others used it, but in a wide variety of ways

and of contexts. Some used it synonymously with personal power and others extended it to individual and community power in concert. Most seemed to connect it, when they did use it, with a sense of self-assertion, self-esteem, and personal and community affirmation. Some connected it to concrete, physical intervention and efficacy in the world and others related it more exclusively to interpersonal, group, institutional or community interactions. Almost all embedded the term in the context of emerging personal identity and finding and claiming one's own voice and place in the world.

My Own Meaning. I explained to everyone that by empowerment, I meant increased capacity, self-confidence, a sense that one could do things in the world and could be a primary actor rather than the one simply acted upon.

Acting In and On the World

Molly Gregory: Learning by Doing. Molly Gregory, the woodcarving teacher, talked about learning by doing and having a real world consequence, where your actions had some tangible outcome. And she appreciated the importance of students learning that a mistake is not a disaster, but an opportunity to look at things in a new way and to explore alternate paths to a solution. Building confidence that one can take a leap and actually do things is essential — confidence that grows by making mistakes and discovering they are not irreparable. Having confidence to do entails a willingness to try, to risk, and to find out by doing, to go forward in the face of not knowing the answer beforehand — to find out by trying.

Decrying how much this is lost in modern society, Molly Gregory remarked, "People have kind of lost the ability to think that they can do things for themselves." To her, the chapel as an undertaking was a direct counterpart to that loss, just as to Mrs. Hall it was a "just do it thing." Don't wait around, don't ask permission, just do it. Yet neither Molly Gregory nor Mrs. Hall readily used the term "empowerment" themselves. When I first mentioned empowerment, Molly asked, unabashedly, echoing Mrs. Hall, "What's that?"

Yet, people were willing to entertain the idea of empowerment and seemed open to my early explanations. Once interviews were well underway, though, it was usually I, not they, who brought the word up again. While some expressed discomfort with the word, like Maria Lindberg above, others seemed to take it in stride. For illustration, I note a few interview excerpts here. On review, there were times when my own predilection toward empowerment made my questions more like assertions than simple queries. For example:

> I ask: Did you notice, among the students, as they would do this work, these carvings and so forth and work on the steeple, could you see the effect? Could you, do you think, in the sense of them becoming . . . really what I would call empowered? I mean, it seems to me that doing that stuff must have been wonderfully empowering.
>
> Molly Gregory: Oh, I think so. Yuh, I think so. I mean, I think they. . . at the dedication, I came away from that feeling <u>absolutely wonderful</u>, cause Betsy Mallinkrodt said that when she was doing the carving, the one thing that she had learned that was, had stayed with her since, was that a mistake is quite often a good thing and not bad.

For Molly, students feeling empowered through the chapel project related to their work having a real world consequence; realizing that mistakes were not disasters and could even be opportunities; and discovering the fun and excitement of "team play". Although these all happened in her time through building and carving, Molly went on to say that students giving chapel talks now is similar and parallels the "just do it" spirit of direct engagement, of each one taking some personal responsibility, of making something happen, and of contributing something to the community — in this case the gift of "giving" a chapel.

<u>Russell Ackoff: Make it Happen.</u> I am reminded of Russell Ackoff (1970), a pioneer in the field of Operations Research, who characterized three radically different attitudes toward the future as (a) wait and see; (b) predict and prepare; and (c) make it happen. He saw these as, respectively, reactive, responsive, and active. When reactive, the larger environment or circumstance dominates and the person feels no power or capacity to do anything but wait and see. With responsiveness there is give and take between

the larger circumstance and the person. But only in the active case is the person really empowered. When making it happen the person acts on the circumstance, rather than being acted upon. Instead of being the victim of circumstance, the person co-creates the future, transforming vision and promise into reality. Ackoff also referred to these three stances, as coping, adaptation, and liberation. In Molly Gregory's terms, being active and liberated would be to remember that you can do things in the world and to go ahead and do them.

Paulo Freire: On Liberation. Ackoff's characterizations parallel Paulo Freire's concepts of magical thinking, naive thinking, and critical consciousness (1986). Magical thinking is acceptance and resignation ("The Gods will it, so be it."). In naive thinking villains and heroes are considered the root of all evil or success. But in critical consciousness people begin to understand their settings systematically, to find their own voice and name their own reality, and to act critically and reflectively to intervene in that reality to transform it. They become subjects of their own reality rather than objects, human beings acting to transform the oppressions they confront and to liberate themselves.

Mrs. Hall's and Molly Gregory's approaches of just do it, don't wait for someone to give you permission or to have the answer resonate with Ackoff and Freire's ideas of people becoming primary actors in their own circumstances and co-creating their own realities. And as chapels have evolved into "Who am I?" or "Who are we?" speeches, the chapel has become a cauldron for students and faculty alike finding their own voices and naming their reality, Freire's first step in liberation. As teacher and writer Pat Schneider (1992) says, "Finding out who you are, feeling good about who you are, is the first step in changing the world."

Freire sees education for liberation as more egalitarian than hierarchical, putting teachers and learners on more equal footing. People would engage as human beings in problem-posing, dialogue, reflection, and action, as mutual teachers and learners. He contrasts this dynamic interchange to the hierarchical "banking" education of domination,

where teachers, considered the source of all knowledge, transfer information into the empty vessels perceiv-ed to be their students — like making bank deposits. In liberating education, by contrast,

> The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [sic] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire, 1970, p. 67)

"Jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" sounds like the kind of mutual, experiential learning involved with both the physical transformation of the chapel and the ongoing giving and receiving of chapels. By contrast, banking education is equated with oppression and domination and regards people as "adaptable, manageable beings" (Freire, 1970, p. 60). With banking education the goal is control and manipulation, where students are acted upon rather than learning to become primary actors. They are considered passive objects rather than sentient subjects who initiate action in the world. They are the listeners, not the speakers, presumed ignorant, their prior knowledge and experience treated as valueless.

Janet Eisendrath, a longtime C.A. teacher, spoke to underlying beliefs behind these two fundamentally different attitudes toward students and education.

> I think, basically, how you view human nature, like if you really think people are more good than bad, then I think you act in a certain way. You have a kind of confidence in them, to use your word, the "empowering" of them. If you really think that people are, um, give them an inch and they'll take a mile. . . then you set up rules in a certain way.
>
> And I think there are people that are more <u>form</u> conscious. There are people that are more organic, that think things will take the shape of the people in them and that will be all right. It may not be the smoothest or the best, but it'll be all right. Then there are other people that really want to take, chop off a few arms and legs and make them <u>fit.</u>

Part of the chapel's power and Concord Academy's strength as a school lies in its underlying belief in students, faculty, and administrators as human beings. Chapels and the school can take the shape of the people in them and it will be all right. Mutual trust and respect for each other as human beings in the world prevail.

The Chapel Demonstrates Freire's & Ackoff's Ideas. In my view, chapels as experiences powerfully demonstrate what Freire and Ackoff talk about as liberating. Chapels turn the tables on traditional teacher-student hierarchies, as students speak and teachers, administrators, and other students listen. Going beyond Freire's notion of equalizing the student-teacher relationship, here students each have the opportunity to address the entire school and to say whatever they like, something almost completely absent from typical school settings. For those moments the student becomes the teacher, not just for one or two, but for the whole school, and every senior is afforded that opportunity.

As history teacher Janet Eisendrath remarked, "They know everybody's going to be there. They have the whole school for a moment. How many times in your life does that happen?" And the school day starts out with a chapel, three out of five days a week. This is not some extra, marginal activity scheduled for the bywaters of the day. No, it is the first thing to happen, setting the tone for the day and for the entire school experience.

> . . . it's a place where everybody gathers and, as a matter of fact, pushes in. . . . I think that the daydreaming and the gathering . . . I think gathering first thing in the morning is one of the most important things the school does. It is the greatest thing. We start like a family. (Janet Eisendrath, history teacher)
>
> It's a moment when the school comes together. . . . We all come together and we all listen in silence. It starts our day. (Clare Nunes, English teacher)

In addition, the student chooses what to say almost without limit and even when limits are suggested, some students waste no time in testing the limits by breaking them. Note the examples described earlier of introducing recorded sound or using profanity. Teacher Sylvia Mendenhall describes the prevailing ethos saying, "They consider it a kind of . . . their fifteen minutes, to express themselves before the whole community, to present themselves before the whole community. Who am I?"

For Freire naming one's own reality and coming to know and understand who one is by naming, are critical to breaking through oppression and moving toward empowerment. "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (Freire, 1970, p. 76). One's own concrete experience and context are the starting points and form the basis for naming

one's own reality, for reflecting on it, for coming to understand it, and eventually for acting on it.

Chapels are the same. Chapels are what each one chooses. And most often people choose to speak about themselves. Students and faculty alike are given both opportunity and validation for focusing on who they are, as people, as individuals in this world, and as social beings as well. As teacher Janet Eisendrath said, "This is you . . . your moment." Describing students who choose not to give a chapel, one faculty member said:

> It's a moment that students look forward to with all their hearts and most seniors give them. Those who don't give them are not ready to . . . sum themselves up. . . . I remember the case of a student who sat down to write his chapel, about five years ago, realized he didn't know who he was. So he went rushing to his advisor and said, "I've discovered I don't know who I am and I can't give my chapel." (Clare Nunes, English teacher)

But for those who do stand before the entire school and name their own reality, share their own reality, and are received fully, attentively, respectfully, there is an elemental sense of authenticity and empowerment. Mary Murray Coleman, longtime C.A. Admissions administrator, says:

> The most perceptive students, I think, understand, particularly as they get to be seniors, the <u>power</u> that is involved as they stand up there. But it isn't til long after they've left here that they really do understand what it represents. And I've heard students talk about that. They want to come back to it. They're drawn to its . . . quietness . . . I think it's a wonderful place to go and be quiet in a world that is not quiet, in a place that is not quiet . . . and listen. And I think in that listening the speaker's empowered. In speaking s/he is empowered . . . for that moment in time. It has become a rite of passage.

Concord Academy Admissions Administrator, Linda Whitlock, described giving her own chapel, relating it to both a feeling of freedom and a sense of responsibility — individuality within the context of community — and liberation and empowerment.

> It's through the vehicle, really, of one member of the community's revealing whatever he or she chooses to reveal about self, that binds me even more tightly to the community. . . . It's kind of a paradox because I gave a chapel last fall . . . and it was then that I realized how self-indulgent I could be. . . . No one suggested a topic. There was no one who would review my draft. . . . But I <u>knew</u> that for fifteen minutes I would have the rapt attention and interest of three hundred and seventy members of my community. That was both liberating and . . . um, what? . . . and made me mindful of the responsibility that I then had.

> And I think these teenagers also see both sides of the giving of a chapel. Some are self-indulgent and, you know, silly and sophomoric, although they're seniors! But most really do take pains to say something that is revealing of self and important to self, but which they want to be heard.
>
> If we were to have that same ritual in the Performing Arts Center. . . or even outside, there would be an entirely different feeling that the members of the community had in listening to this . . . talk. It would become much more of just a talk, a soliloquy. But for it to take place in this building, which has spiritual significance — and spiritual in an absolutely secular fashion — is community-building and is empowering of the individuals within the community.

The relationship between individual and community empowerment is critical here and bears closer examination. Too often individual empowerment is juxtaposed to community empowerment, as if individuals growing strong and vocal diminishes community. With respect to the chapel, questions are raised about whether or not chapels are egocentric and self-indulgent, lauding the individual <u>over</u> the community. English teacher Phil McFarland notes:

> In a world that's constantly moving back and forth between the claims of the individual and the community, this [chapel] certainly extols the claims of the individual, where every student knows before he or she gets out of here that at one point he will stand in front of the entire community and have complete control over what goes on.

"Stand before the <u>entire</u> community and have <u>complete</u> control" — mentioned time and again, this once in a lifetime, heightened opportunity adds to the power of the moment and offers each chapel the potential of becoming a rite of passage. What does power mean here and what kind of power in what context?

<u>Power To & With vs. Power Over</u>

I find the notion of power <u>with</u>, rather than power <u>over</u> helpful here (Kreisberg, 1992; Starhawk, 1982; Surrey, 1991). Power <u>with</u> posits that environments and interactions can support both individuals and groups simultaneously — empowerment of one is not at the expense of the other. Instead, each can expand and amplify the power and capacity of the other. Empowerment in this sense has to do with power <u>with</u> and power <u>to,</u> rather than power <u>over</u>. It is not being empowered because of winning in a

contested terrain, but instead building a sense of mutual empowerment, of mutual power and capacity. This is power in a positive rather than a negative sense (Starhawk, 1982; Miller, 1991) Considerable work links power in this sense particularly to women, distinguishing between how men and women typically relate to power (Austin & Phelps, 1975; Jordan et al., 1992; McClelland, 1975; Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; ; Stone, 1994; ; Starhawk, 1987; Weiler, 1988).

In Assertive Women (1975), Stanley Phelps and Nancy Austin describe how women have been excluded from the domain of power, carefully guarded as a male bastion of strength and domination, of authority and power over others. Phelps and Austin recognize a kind of personal power distinct from that male fortress and more compatible with women:

> . . . we are concerned with power as a positive, creative force that helps you choose for yourself, gives you a feeling of worth and purpose, and fosters a strong conviction to overcome feelings of anxiety and helplessness.

Their use of the term "power" parallels what Ackoff and Freire call empowerment. And like Ackoff and Freire for Phelps and Austin acting in and on the world, rather than just reacting to it, are pivotal to a sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and personal power.

> Being able to initiate action promotes an assertive attitude and a sense of personal power. An assertive attitude includes autonomy — learning how to set your own limits, making independent decisions, and being free of unnecessary guilt. You acknowledge by your actions that you can run your own life. (Phelps & Austin, 1975, pp. 56-57)

This is part of what Molly Gregory and Mrs. Hall meant by "just do it" or learning that you could do things and make things happen with a real world consequence.

Others reinforce this concept of empowerment, agreeing that it is more consistent and compatible with women's ways of operating than with men's predominant modes (Miller, 1991; Snyder & Weiner, 1992). The traditional male view also sees power as a limited commodity, something to vie for. Women, relating to the notion of empowerment rather than power per se, approach empowerment as abundant, rather than limited, enabling of self and others. In this view, one person becoming empowered in no way implies that

another is less powerful. Rather than competing for power, people are coming into their own capacities and wholeness, into their full flowering as engaged, effective human beings, individually and together. Individual and community growth work hand in hand.

Starhawk (1987) talks about this as power-from-within, which she juxtaposes to power over. As she sees it, power over is about death and destruction, while power-from-within is "the power we sense in a seed, in the growth of a child, the power we feel writing, weaving, working, creating, making choices." It relates to "the root meaning of the word power, from the Latin, 'podere' ('to be able'). It is the power that comes from within" (Starhawk, 1982, p. 3). She goes on to say:

> . . . power can no longer be "seen as something people have — kings, tzars, generals, hold power as one holds a knife."
>
> Immanent power, power-from-within, is not something we have but something we can do. We can choose to cooperate or to withdraw cooperation from any system. The power relationships and institutions of immanence must support and further the ability of individuals to shape the choices and decisions that affect them. And those choices must also recognize the interconnectedness of individuals in a community of beings and resources that all have inherent value. (Starhawk, 1982, p. 14)

This kind of power from within has a strong spiritual dimension, summoning strength by connecting with one's deep inner being and acting out of that place of power. This operates on a collective as well as an individual level and seems as apt descriptor for the kind of inner search and collective attention, focus, and love that come together in the chapel. Power from within and power to seem intinately intertwined here.

I am reminded also of something Mrs. Hall said to us as students in the early '60s, focusing on the importance of choice, both making choices and following through on them. I carried a written form of her talk around for years, although now I cannot find a copy of it anywhere. Her words may have been more extensive, but my partial memory goes like this:

> Today it is not the chopping of wood or the hauling of water that is called for. It is the ability to identify choices. To make the right choice more often than not and to accept responsibility for the choices that are made.

The power to see that you have a choice, that there are options. Recognize an opportunity and then go for it. Just do it. Take the risk. As Mrs. Hall had said about putting the chapel up in the first place on the Academy's formal lawn, "If they don't like it, we know how to take it down" (Hall, 1963).

In Studies in Empowerment: Steps toward Understanding and Action (1984), psychologist Julian Rappaport and others elaborate on empowerment as power to rather than power over. This work is particularly helpful in extending the idea of empowerment to organizations and communities. It also raises the important point that empowerment is not the same for everyone, in every circumstance, for all time.

> Empowerment is viewed as a process: the mechanism by which people, organiza-tions, and communities gain mastery over their lives . . . For some people the mechanism of empowerment may lead to a "sense" of control; for others it may lead to actual control, the practical power to affect their own lives. Empowerment can be either understood as an internalized attitude, or as an observable behavior.
>
> Empowerment is easy to define in its absence: powerlessness, real or imagined; learned helplessness; alienation; loss of a sense of control over one's own life. It is more difficult to define positively because it takes on a different form in different people and contexts. (Rappaport, 1984, p. 3)

Empowerment as Contextual and Relative

In the chapel we see dramatically how personality, context, and relationship affect empowerment. One carver, given the opportunity to carve her "own" angel, finds the process tremendously empowering and feels highly identified with the result. Others say they remember the task as arduous and do not especially personally identify with their own work, although they feel strongly about the ties they made with other carvers, their experience of Molly Gregory, and feel affection toward the chapel as a whole. Even though they may not feel a strong sense of their own personal accomplishment, some do think of the products as their legacy to Concord Academy. Others felt empowered just knowing that students like themselves had done this marvelous work, had helped to make the chapel what it was. That is the positive side.

On the negative side, some felt left out, resentful toward what they considered an inner cadre of carvers. Exclusion led to a feeling of disaffection and disempowerment. We see the same dilemma in management today where special "hot teams" pull people together to work collaboratively on thorny problems. These have been enormously successful in cracking tough problems quickly and creatively. Those on the "hot teams" report feeling energized, creative, and empowered, improving their confidence in themselves and their team and building a strong sense of mutual commitment and community. But many not on the team feel left out and resentful. The strategy of pulling a small group apart to work collectively can work for the group and for the organization or community as a whole in terms of concrete outcomes to solve particular problems, but the sense of a select inner cadre can undermine the more general climate of everyone feeling that they belong and are equally valued and included.

Then there is the problem of time and change over time. There are clear indications that people feel especially empowered when they have control over things, when they make them happen. When someone else comes along and changes what others already know and value, it can be disempowering for those who "suffer" the change and empowering for those who design and implement it.

One fascinating study of a residential mental hospital lounge involved work on variable space use and furniture placement. Each time researchers made careful furniture arrangements they were immediately repositioned by the patients who resented anyone usurping their right to decide where the furniture should go. They apparently valued their right to choose over any interest they might have had in trying out alternative arrangements. Someone else directing and deciding the change makes it an imposition. Resistance is natural and the right to resist assumed.

Changes to neighborhoods, cities, or towns are similar. People feel disempowered by changes that are imposed without their involvement and violated if changes destroy things they highly value and have permanently fixed in memory. Their values and

memories can be so important and abiding to them that they harbor a persistent belief in things as they knew them. To them their memory of a thing (or in our case a place) reflects its essence, what it "really" is. In the chapel this shows up when dramatic changes occur. The steeple is a case in point. Many alumnae from before the steeple's time see it as marring the chapel as they knew it, as the chapel "really" is to them. As Janet Eisendrath noted, people often feel that the "real" thing is still embedded in the whatever has been changed:

> When you're talking about empowerment of space, when we, when you remodel and you change, or when you change spaces . . . they're still under there for the people that knew them.

The steeple was an unwelcome change to many who came before it and a symbol of their own contribution to those remaining. For those from the steeple-builders' time, change helped make the place their own, cementing their sense of ownership and connection.

The same problem is demonstrated even earlier in relation to the chapel. For some early alumnae the chapel building itself was resented for marring their formal garden. For others from that same time period, the chapel was exciting and inspirational. So one early alumna canoed down the river to help shingle the steeple, while another spent over a year painting a picture of the chapel, holding the paintbrush in her teeth and working from her hospital bed where she lay paralyzed with polio. What is empowering for one person may not be for the next, and what one person may find inspiration in, another may consider pedestrian hard work or even an oppressive burden. No matter what, your starting perspective and abiding associations are critical in the equation.

I am reminded of the story of the three bricklayers working. A bystander comes up to the first one and asks what the person is doing. Barely acknowledging the query and never looking up, the bricklayer says, "I'm laying bricks." The onlooker goes up to the second worker and poses the same question. This time the reply is, "Earning my daily bread." Asked the same question, the third bricklayer pauses thoughtfully, stands tall,

arms outstretched and sweeping, and in a reverent tone replies, "I am building a cathedral." Same context, but three different people, three different perspectives, different agendas, different frames of reference. What would the critical theorist say of these workers?

While the bricklayer story might imply a value judgment of these workers, I do not intend that in relation to the chapel or the story. People have a multitude of reasons for their own interpretations of the world around and within them. It would be naive and presumptuous of us to expect that the same thing would work the same way for all people at all times and in all circumstances. What is empowering for one is not necessarily for another. What is disempowering for one is not necessarily for another. What we can hope to do is to discern some of those differences.

Toward A Taxonomy for Empowerment

Lately one can feel that the term "empowerment" suffers from overuse. People talk of being empowered in personal relationships, being empowered to speak up, even in the name of repressive causes, about empowerment agendas and legislation and strategies. It is surprising that the word is now so heavily used, when not long ago it was practically unknown. Ironically, the word does not even appear in the dictionary of the 1991 computer program I am using. Community psychologist, Charles Kieffer, (1984), equates the popularity of the term with a community action agenda, which is also consistent with its emergence in architecture and planning fields. As he sees it:

> "Empowerment" is coming of age in the 1980s. An idea rooted in the "social action" ideology of the 1960s, and the "self-help" perspectives of the 1970s, empowerment appears with increasing frequency in discussion of strategies for prevention and community intervention. (Berger & Neyhaus, 1977; Engelberg, 1981; Rappaport, 1981)

At the same time as "empowerment" has gained popularity and appeal, however, Kieffer notes that its meaning is still imprecise. He notes that at an organizational or community level, empowerment can be used to mean things like "'mutual support,'

'community organization,' 'neighborhood participation,' or 'self-sufficiency'" (1984, p. 10). At a personal level, empowerment is equated with "'coping skills,' 'personal efficacy,' 'competence,' and 'self-esteem'" (1984, p. 10). While these all seem apt for the concept, Kieffer suggests that empowerment may go beyond any one of them and may be more fully represented by some combination of them all.

Rappaport (1984, p. 4) reinforces the idea that empowerment involves a host of characteristics, citing its characteristics as: lay, rather than professional; collaborative rather than top-down; diverse; local; self-evaluated; sharing rather than controlling; learning by doing; focused on strengths not weaknesses; and treating people as active subjects, not passive objects. It is helpful to remember here that Rappaport's perspective is in relation to communities and organizations, as well as individuals.

For Rappaport, Kieffer, Starhawk, Freire, and others empowerment does not happen in a vacuum, but rather in context and through connection, through speaking and being heard, through naming, through validating each others' experience and insight. Individual growth and empowerment are intimately associated with community. As people have said about the chapel, people are empowered both by speaking and by listening. Psychologist Richard Katz notes that "Empowerment increases many fold because it is the community, as well as its members, which is empowered" (1984, p. 212). Katz describes not just empowerment, but "empowering environments" where "the potential for empowerment increases synergistically" (1984, p. 204).

Katz posits that this entails a fundamental shift in our understanding of individuals in relation to communities. Rather than seeing individuality as increasingly separate and distinct, Katz introduces the idea of being "embedded" in a community, intimately connected at the same time as being separate and unique. The community and the individuals within community both work toward the growth and betterment of each other. Synergistically empowering communities involve those in positions of power

over giving up their positions of privilege and control and entering instead into creative collaboration and cooperation, so that power is shared throughout and mutual support infuses the entire community. In Katz's words:

> It is not merely healing systems we are talking about but world views and perceptions of reality. (1984, p. 203)

Katz goes on to identify transforming education and rituals, in particular, as pivotal to empowering communities.

> Rituals of transformation are the essential link in introducing synergistic community. In the area of healing, these rituals connect the healing power, the healing, and the community. By providing experiences of transpersonal bonding, the rituals enable individuals to sense their deep interconnectedness and realize their communal responsibilities for their own and others' health. (1984, p. 222)

The Chapel Integrates Empowerment Traits

Many of the ingredients described above for empowerment are powerfully combined in chapels. People come together leaving behind their titles and trappings. Students are given the floor. Judgment is suspended. Attention is powerful and focused. Encounter is immanent, palpable. An aura of inviolability and safety pervades. Respect is pervasive and primary, respect of the community for speaker and of the speaker for the community. Whatever the chapel speaker says takes on a special resonance, amplified by the presence of so many so ready to listen and to hear. And, as Katz notes, it may be no accident that this powerful synergism and opportunity for mutual individual and community growth takes place in a ritualistic setting of transformation, of "saying hello to your adulthood and good-bye to your childhood." "It has become a rite of passage."

Safety & Security. A feeling of safety and support are central to the outcome. The power of the community fully attending, in the sense of being fully present, engaged, open and accepting, creates an incredibly supportive environment in which it is possible for the individual giving a chapel to risk speaking from the heart and the gut. Speakers are welcomed and challenged to be authentic, to be real in a way that is rare in any setting.

Time and again people mentioned the profound trust and feeling of safety students must feel in the chapel and in the community.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

For psychologist Abraham Maslow (1962) a feeling of safety and security are a first requirement for healthy growth and development toward what it means to be fully human. Outlining a hierarchy of human needs, like a ladder, Maslow puts safety and security as the first rung, followed later by belonging and acceptance, leading eventually to self-esteem, and rising finally to Maslow's highest human need of self-actualization. In Maslow's view, higher order needs cannot be satisfied or achieved without first securing lower order needs. His highest order need, self-actualization, could also be called personal empowerment or authenticity.

With the chapel, countless people affirm that giving a chapel has a lot to do with self — self-expression, self-understanding, self-confidence to stand before the entire community and speak, and self-realization. Although no one I spoke with mentioned the term "self-actualization" or even "authenticity," they did refer to the chapel as "real," as a "rite of passage," and as "people revealing who they 'really' are." In some ways, each of these is part of what Maslow means by self-actualization. The whole chapel experience offers some interesting insights into Maslow's hierarchy. It suggests that we might look at his various needs not so much as a linear, hierarchic ladder as an interconnecting, interdependent web.

We can see various needs being met in the chapel, from safety and security to belonging and acceptance to self-assurance and self-esteem, and, I submit, in some cases even self-actualization. But the chapel experience feels as if each of these cycles back and forth, one reinforcing the other. When a person feels comfortable and trusting enough to reveal her innermost feelings in a chapel, that intimacy in turn invites inclusion and implies acceptance of the entire community as intimate "friend." Being privy to such

revelations helps each one feel that he or she belongs to the larger, extended family of the speaker and the school. How real the speaker is willing to be opens a space and an invitation for the listener to respond in kind. Witness the principle of reciprocity in disclosures explained earlier. This seems to apply not just to spoken disclosures, but to levels of attentiveness and how "real" people are with each other, whether their role be listening or speaking.

So, rather than safety or security being a prerequisite for a sense of belonging, and belonging, in turn, being needed before self-esteem can be achieved, we prefer to see these as intimately intertwined and mutually reinforcing. By the same token, I imagine that these various needs could also undermine each other by their absence or sudden loss.

Acceptance. Acceptance is a case in point. Accepting people's chapels without judgment seems central to the feeling of trust and safety that prevails in the chapel. I learned, however, of at least one instance when serious judgment followed a boy's chapel and he was actually expelled from school following his chapel. I found this so shocking and so antithetical to everything else people were telling me about chapels and their inviolability that I have actually avoided mentioning it for fear of somehow trespassing on that protective blanket of trust that now prevails and that seems so central to the best that chapels are. That it was mentioned as an aberration, however, confirms the rarity of such instances.

Equally telling was the time during the '70s, mentioned by several faculty members, when many students opted out of chapels altogether or gave what one faculty member called "non-chapels." One apparent reason was a lack of acceptance. History teacher Bill Bailey recalls:

> What happened is that students were doing it. It was their time. In the '70s it was so much their time and that was it. But at the same time I remember, particularly in the mid-seventies when the boys first came to Concord Academy, there was a time in which the kids perceived themselves as being up here not so much on display, but they figured that they had a critical audience. And so, instead of the anxiety being dissipated, in a sense it heightened. And so we had a phenomena there in which a significant number of kids just would not give chapels at all.

> They were intimidated. And some of the most outstanding students — I still remember this vividly because of kids that grew up and subsequently married — first couple, got married at Concord Academy. One was the sophomore class president and uh, she was the junior class president. And they didn't give their chapel talks. And I was advisor to one of them and I felt terribly. And they said, "Too much risk." So what I see now that is absolutely <u>wonderful</u> about the school is there's no risk at all. And there's no judgment.

<u>Physical Comfort</u>. A crucial need goes unmet and the whole chapel experience plummets far from anything we would call empowering. Consider physical comfort which Maslow posits as a primary need, critical to satisfy before moving to higher level needs. For at least one person I met this is painfully true in the chapel. This person noted:

> The ritual in which the seniors get to address the rest of the school has come to be (and it wasn't originally when I first came here), but it has certainly come to be, a <u>central</u> experience in the school. Most of the faculty . . . I'm a little bit claustrophobic, so I don't enjoy it as much as others. . . . For me personally, and I don't know how much I want this generally made public — I feel like a lone voice when I say it — I find the physical shape of the place inadequate for the numbers that are in there. And I feel cramped and uncomfortable when the entire school is there. . . .
>
> I wish you, as an architect, could make it larger so that it could more comfortably accommodate the school, because the school's not going to get any smaller. And yet, I think there are some who just love that aspect there — that we're all flesh to flesh. We're really crammed in there. And I sit like, like this (demonstrates being scrunched up) so that I won't impose upon the person who's sitting right here and the person who's sitting right here. (gesturing to each side) And if I sit back like this, my shoulders press against their space. And under those circumstances, hunched forward and hands pressed by knees and so on, I'm not in the posture that I like to be in to enjoy the experience. That's just a physical thing. Meeting houses weren't designed to be comfortable, of course (We both laugh). But. . . even granted that they're not meant to be comfortable, it's just almost, for my experience, falling short of the minimum of comfort.

This person often stands in the back of the chapel, suffering blocked views and troubled hearing to avoid the extreme discomfort of crowded seating. Sometimes the solution is not to come to the chapel at all. Here physical discomfort overwhelms almost any other concern. The minimum requirement lacking, withdrawal results. Feeling like a lone voice against overcrowding, this faculty member might be heartened to know that others described these same concerns, though none revealed the same level of heartfelt anguish.

Having spent several chapels in the vestibule myself, from there the experience is so partial with vision and hearing so hampered that I would be hard pressed to recommend it. Physical constraints predominate and overwhelm other needs and opportunities, adding credibility to Maslow's arguments that hierarchy can be at play among basic human needs.

Claustrophobia to One is Closeness to Another. Yet what one decries as "flesh to flesh," another cherishes as cozy nestling. Far more people spoke warmly of appreciating the chapel's coziness than criticized it. Administrator Linda Whitlock hailed the coziness as bringing the school closer together as a community, balancing what might otherwise be too weighted toward individualism. In her words:

> The chapel has certain limits, certain constraints on individualism, simply because community is just as emphasized in that building by its size, which is small for the size community we have. So we've got to be sitting real close to each other. We can't separate ourselves from each other in that building. . . . I'm glad we've got to squeeze in. I'm glad I sometimes squeeze in beside students. You know? And our elbows have to touch. I think that matters. And it binds me to that individual, but also to the community of students. . . . So the building itself does have ways of letting me know that I'm a member of the community, at the same time as I'm there to hear one individual talk in a very individualistic, very self-indulgent fashion about him or her self.

I remember feeling honored when faculty members made a space for me, an outsider of sorts, on their already crowded chapel bench. My field notes from that day say:

> I am amazed and really feel extra welcomed and honored when an entirely full pew of faculty somehow makes room for me. It seems so tender and caring — so welcoming — as if there is an easy assumption that I do belong and a place will be made for me. (9/10/92)

There was no hesitation, no sidelong glance, no muffled grumbling, but rather a smooth, easy, relaxed ordinariness as they made room for me. Small details perhaps, but they made me feel included, erasing a lot of my apprehension about the difference between me and everyone else in that community. I felt welcomed to sit as a member of the community. So again the chapel illustrates that what is empowering and positive for one person can be just the opposite for another. Despite consistency to what many say about the chapel, personalities and physical or psychological make-up are not immaterial to what happens to people in that or any other particular setting under particular circumstances.

A Conceptual Circle of Personal Power

Belonging is vital and early in Maslow's basic needs. It is also important to Reynold Bean and Harris Clemes's construct of the conditions deemed necessary for self-esteem and personal power (1986). Here self-esteem is fostered by having clear models, belonging and connectiveness to others, appreciation of one's uniqueness, and a sense of efficacy (figure 10.1). Considered interwoven and simultaneous, these form a circle, not a linear hierarchy

Figure 10.1. The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem (Bean & Clemes, 1986)

> Uniqueness: One must acknowledge and respect the qualities which make one special or unique and must receive affirmation that such qualities are valued by others.
>
> Connectiveness: One must be able to gain satisfaction from valued associations and the importance of these associations must be affirmed by others. [I prefer "connectedness" and will use it for their "connectiveness."]
>
> Models: One must be able to refer to adequate examples in order to establish meaningful values, goals, ideals, and personal standards.
>
> Power: One must have the resources, capability, and opportunity to influence the circumstances of one's own life. (Bean & Clemes, 1986)

Connectedness. Chapels help foster these very conditions. We have seen how strongly the chapel fosters a sense of belonging and feeling connected: the closeness, the snuggling in; the feeling part of the whole; the assurance that each one will one day stand and speak before the entire school — a place reserved, a moment guaranteed. This is rein-forced by all the ways each person feels connected to the one who speaks —playing

on the same sports team with the speaker, living in the same dorm, sitting in the same class and taking the same math test later in the day. As the chapel-giver is honored for the day and the moment, by association the speaker's friends and associates feel affirmed too.

Close connections are underscored by the very intimacy of the setting. People can look you in the eye in the chapel, can actually see each other, and speak in a normal tone of voice — connecting. No thunderous projection or grand oratory are needed here, no grand proclamation from on high, from a distance, but rather a cozy fireside intimacy. Personal connections are affirmed as well through the greeters, the chapel signs, the fan club, the host of well-wishers afterwards. Both speaker and listeners confirm their connectedness through these. Beyond all of these, however, having people really listen, having them care is the ultimate connection and affirmation, building strength in both speaker and listeners. As Noah Fisk, '93, said "Some chapels definitely stick with me and make me feel strong."

Connectedness has an historic dimension, too, through the building itself having held the school in its embrace all these years, having heard so many chapels, been touched by so many hands. Historic connections are brought home visually and sensually as well from carving to pulpit, altar to angels. Even the building as a whole ties us to other people and other times, from the chapel's original wavy glass and early 18th century American design; to pegged and rough-hewn wooden trusses; simple, straight-backed pews and plain white plaster walls; original church sign over the entry (figure 10.2); and simple, elegant wrought iron latches on the never-locked doors (figs 10.3 -10.5).

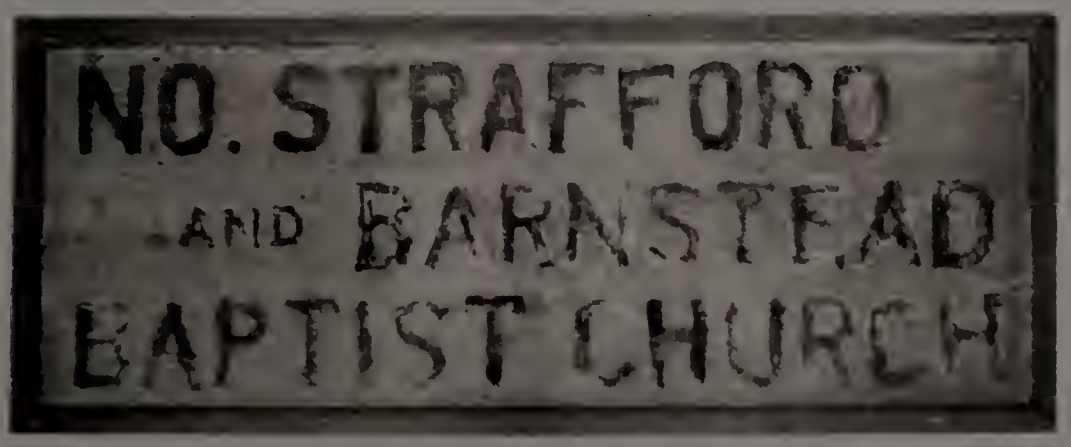

Figure 10.2. The Original Chapel Sign

Figure 10.3. Side Door Latch

Figure 10.4. The Chapel's Side Door

Figure 10.5. Front Door Handles — Never Locked

All these combine to remind us of other people and other times linked to this place and, through the place, connected to us here now.

These bind us together, even without the further personal connections of sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, friends from the community or from years past; without the recollections of chapels heard or not yet spoken, but evolving still in thought; without the memories and feelings stored deep and true of loved ones past, of deaths not easily absorbed or so soon deserved. These must all be counted and weighed in the balance of invisible webs linking each of us through time and space with chapels past, present, and future.

Uniqueness. Uniqueness is emphasized through the giving of chapels, each different and honoring the special attributes of the individual chapel-giver. Having no prescriptions and few dictums offers a freedom that honors uniqueness. Your chapel can be as different as you want it to be. There is pressure, too, to recognize and claim your uniqueness. The evolution of chapels into "Who am I?" rites of passage brings this all home, probing beneath the surface for answers that only the chapel-giver knows.

As teacher Kevin Jennings noted, "I find that it's the process of assessing where you are in your life that's really the most valuable thing for someone that gives the chapel." The focus becomes both how am I distinct from every other human being in the universe and how am I the same. Separate, but connected. Getting to know yourself. The entire school waits to hear who you are, what you think, the entire school "attends" in a powerful confirmation of the value of each person's uniqueness. My son, Noah, and his friend, Amani (both C.A. '93) saw the chapel as affirming and allowing you to connect with yourself, both through the solitude the chapel affords and through giving a chapel.

> Noah: The campus, I find, is like really small, so it's hard to get away from people. But, like, you can always go to the chapel to, like, you know, chill out by yourself. That's one thing about C.A.. . . you kind of lose your identity, just cause there are so many people around. In order to, you know, gotta spend some time. . . I think it's important to spend time with yourself. Like I didn't really learn that until senior year. . .
>
> Amani: Yuh. I think I lost my sense of individuality. Yeah.
>
> Noah: You kind of, well . . . To a certain extent I lost my sense of individuality, but um. . . I was kind of more aware of that, cause, like, I was aware, you

know, this is my senior year. This is my last year of high school and I had to be an individual, kind of, like, go out of there after this is done.

Amani: That's what chapel represents, really. Every senior has to give one, so it sort of acknowledges that.

The chapel as haven for solitude and nexus of community are not at odds. Amani and Noah continued:

Amani: Plus um, when you go out to the chapel and you're by yourself. I like to think in contrasts . . . the feeling of being in this seemingly vast room when you're by yourself, compared to when it's full of the love and the warmth of having the whole community around you. And to sit and just, like, imagine everyone there, yet they're not. That's sort of another whole feeling.

Noah: Yuh, you can definitely feel, like, the vibes.

Amani: Yuh. The vibes are always there. That's one of the things. The people are always in the room, [even when] you're usually there by yourself.

Interviewing Amani and Noah together was like having a conversation — warm, personal, and thought provoking. The chapel brings out the contemplative in people, invites them to ask themselves what they <u>really</u> think and feel. Both Amani and Noah have been so openly thoughtful, interested and supportive throughout this study, that I would like to amplify your sense of them with a picture (figure 10.6).

Figure 10.6. Amani Willett and Noah Fisk, C.A. '93

Models. Returning to Clemes's and Bean's circle, a third key ingredient is having models in one's life. The chapel offers models both in terms of how to give a chapel and in terms of windows on people's lives and values — years of models for students and decades for some teachers. Models of how to give a chapel offer a huge gamut of options, from the most understated to the most flamboyant, the most sociopolitical to the most detached, from intimately revealing to witty and entertaining. There are no end of examples to reject or emulate.

The same is true for models of other people's lives. Each student is a model for every other one, to some extent, simply by being a peer, a student "just like me." But, at the same time, listeners find special reasons to identify with and project themselves onto the speaker. One listener may have similar hair or clothes or mannerisms as the speaker, another may have a similar sense of humor, a third may have been in just the situation that the chapel-giver describes. Some may identify based on race or class or gender, some on religious affiliation, or on sexual preference. In any case, chapels cast the speaker in bold relief, for all to see and to incorporate or not into their own image of themselves as they imagine they are or could be.

Power and Capacity. Finally there is power, capacity, a feeling of efficacy. At the outset a sense of power through doing comes from the physical act of taking the building down and reassembling it, from sanding and oiling pews — rescuing and rehabilitating things, bringing them back to life. Then comes the power of mastering a craft and producing a fine result — carving the great Biblical lines for the front of the chapel, or later building the altar, or steeple, or pulpit. There is power and satisfaction in making something physical, tangible. There is power in starting in, even without necessarily knowing how beforehand, and in learning by doing, by trying, by starting and then keeping going. These are power in the sense of material accomplishment, power to. Some might call this power over in the sense of mastery over material. Others might think of it as learning to be in tune with material, and working with it, as an artist might. But

even those who might think of this as power over, would not call it power against, but rather, power over in the sense of bringing out the latent possibilities in a material.

In addition, the giving of chapels themselves represents power: the power of voice, of daring to speak, sometimes of daring to reveal, challenge, or exhort. There is power, too, in coming to grips with who you are and trying to articulate and understand that. The focused, collective, concentrated attention of the whole community represents power as well — the power of active, intentional common witness. As one person described it, "a mantle descends upon whoever is giving a chapel." That power infuses the speaker with power as well, just as the speaker's power of focus and intention can crystallize the group. For some this sense of power extends to taking on an issue and trying to get the school to change or trying to get the individuals in the school to see things in a new light or operate in a new way.

Power and capacity are concentrated and symbolized in the building, too, through all it has experienced and absorbed over time and through all the focus of care and attention put into it by hearts, minds, and hands over the many years. Personal and community power come full circle in the chapel, each one intimately tied to the other.

Still, some think that chapels tip the balance in favor of the individual. Some think the community is lost, buried, or impugned in this self-conscious, self-centered ritual of giving a chapel. But what about the power of "receiving" chapels, experiencing them, in concert, in community, and in silence. Silence. Right there the power jumps a notch, for speaker and listener. Reiterating what Admissions Director Mary Murray Coleman said about the chapel:

> . . . it's a wonderful place to go and be quiet in a world that is not quiet, in a place that is not quiet . . . um . . . and listen. And I think in that listening the speaker is empowered. In speaking s/he is empowered . . . for that moment in time. It has become a rite of passage.

Both individuals and the community play vital roles in that rite of passage and both grow and change as a result.

Wrap-Up & What Comes Next

This chapter has focused on empowerment in terms of the feeling of both individuals and the school as a whole. Empowerment has been tied to self-confidence, self-expression, self-esteem, to the emergence of voice and assertion of identity. We have seen these fostered by a setting that is accepting, attentive, communal, and connected. We have also seen how different people respond differently to things and what is empowering to one may not be to another. Context and one's particular perspective and starting place are pivotal. Who decides is crucial. Are you the change agent or the one for whom change is an imposition? We have also explored some of relationships between individual and community empowerment and tried to demonstrate how the two can be mutually reinforcing through chapels.

The next chapter looks at the chapel in terms of empowerment that is more overtly politically charged and intended. Sociopolitical contexts and agendas are considered and chapels that particularly relate to these are described. This chapter focuses on selected individual student or faculty chapels to some extent, but also goes beyond those to consider community meetings in the chapel and the senior Baccalaureate, which is like a whole series of mini-chapels rolled into one.

CHAPTER 11

EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

"Finding out who you are and feeling good about yourself
is the first step in changing the world." — Pat Schneider, 1992

Empowerment in Different Guises

So far this discussion has focused largely on psychological empowerment and/or personal power, although I have tried to demonstrate important ties between individual and community empowerment. Identity, self-confidence and self-esteem, while pivotal to personal empowerment, do not necessarily address sociopolitical empowerment. Many who talk and write about empowerment recognize the importance of people embracing their own identities and finding their own voices, but they do not stop there. In Transforming Power: Domination, empowerment, and education, educator Seth Kreisberg writes about where you draw the line:

> . . . empowerment is seen as a process that demands both personal and institutional change. It is a personal transformation out of silence and submission that is characterized by the development of an authentic voice. It is a social process of self-assertion in one's world. [On] one level empowerment is a psychological process — . . . intimately connected with the individual's feelings of self-worth and self-confidence and sense of efficacy, . . . but also linked to the social and political conditions of people's lives and their access to resources. . . .
>
> Not surprisingly, as the theme of empowerment has begun to enter into mainstream discourses of educational change, it has begun to be drained of its critical edge . . . empowerment retains its participatory meaning but less its connection to critiques of domination and oppression. Deprived of this social-historical context, empowerment is transformed from a generative theme for democratic and liberatory change into a technique for the "effective" delivery of educational services. (Kreisberg, 1992, pp. 18-20)

When it comes to chapels, some focus exclusively on the personal, while others tackle a larger institutional or societal issue. In the wonderful way that narratives have of

encompassing both the personal and political, many chapels weave the two together, with the personal bringing issues home with real people, in real settings, with concrete examples. Simultaneously the political gives the personal larger societal relevance and import. "To recount the past is to reclaim it, to reevaluate ourselves in relation to others" (Makler, 1991, p. 46). "Stories keep history moving, even as it moves in and through us" (Helle, 1991, p. 64).

In the chapel we see stories of students not only finding something of their own voices, but enabling each other's voices as well. The student who speaks for the first time about anguishing childhood abuse lends courage to those who have had similar experiences and never dared to speak. It is more usual to consider such disclosures in private, intimate settings between bosom friends. As a community-wide setting the chapel automatically assumes a social dimension. As Madeleine Grumet (1991) so eloquently describes:

> When there is one story, it becomes the story, my story, and when it is delivered to another, it arrives gift wrapped in transference. (p.72)
>
> Multiple texts and multiple interpreters bring the presentation of personal knowledge out of the whispered confidences of the analytic dyad, complicit couple, sado-masochistic duo, and into a community of people who share a world. (p. 76)

Student & Faculty Chapels with Sociopolitical Intent

Even though the chapel has an inherent social, community dimension and to give any chapel implies some community intent, some speakers overtly intend to confront and change the community, while others focus more on sharing their own personal stories and impression of themselves with the school as a whole. Sharing here a few stories about chapels with overt sociopolitical intentions should make this difference clear. At the beginning of this study, I remember being surprised that the chapel sometimes had been

used as a site of protest, since certainly that was not at all the case in my time as a student at Concord when a sense of the chapel as sacrosanct, formal, and religious prevailed.

Chapels as Protest

One of my first conversations about the chapel was with the present headmaster, Tom Wilcox. I had just mentioned that from alumnae I had talked with from my time at Concord, their feeling of connection with the chapel seemed strongly tied with their feelings about Mrs. Hall. Where they felt great affection and warmth for Mrs. Hall, that carried over to the chapel. When their relation to Mrs. Hall was more problematic, their feelings for the chapel seemed more cool and distant. Following those remarks, my conversation with Tom went like this:

> Tom: Well, of course, it's hard to expect everybody to become strongly affiliated anyway, because adolescence is this incredible time of individuation. And to protest against those things that you love most is part of being an adolescent. And us, maybe the fact that the chapel is used now, much less so, I mean, much more so than what was in vogue here, as a place where those protests are lodged.
>
> Me: Oh, are they?
>
> Tom: Oh (loudly and vehemently), I've been absolutely torn apart in that building! . . . One student sat there about five years ago and she said, "We have an administration that has ruined the school." And she talked about how awful it was. And it didn't dawn on her that nothing happened to her, other than, you know, some interesting conversations about what the facts might have been.

Chapels to Offend

Other faculty talked of some students lambasting the school in their chapels and of times they were offended by the students going past what the faculty considered acceptable limits of behavior. Katy Rea Schmitt, now a science teacher at the school, and a past student and C.A. parent, remarked:

> I've been offended in there, Several years ago there was one senior who decided to show some pornographic pictures . . . I found that I was offended. And he showed them only to — the freshmen sit in the front section — he showed them only to the freshmen. But I happened to be sitting close enough to the front that I saw them. And I really couldn't quite believe what I saw. . . .

He was just sort of a radical that was out to test every woman that he could offend, and so forth. . . . I talked to other faculty and I was one of the few who even saw what he showed. So there weren't enough faculty to see it and, I don't know, he was given a talking to by his advisor and that's about all. . . .

Me: So there isn't a sense of, maybe, decorum? It's rather like, here's my platform in which I can push whatever it is that I want?

Katy: To a large degree it is. And when people push too far and the school reacts and says, you know, "That was lousy taste and isn't appropriate," the kids get so outraged.

Me: Yuh. Like, who are you to infringe on my freedom.

Katy: Freedom of speech. You know. Exactly. This is my . . . You can't stop me.

Chapels as Platforms

Other times students tackle issues, not necessarily to offend, but to have a real impact on the school and affect its policies. Katy described another incident in the chapel as follows:

> They do, indeed, use it as a platform. And some choose to be more revealing about themselves than others. Somebody got up there a week or so ago and said, "If the school won't worry about your safe sex, I will." And I, when I got up I realized I'd been sitting on a condom the whole time. She had sprinkled them all over the seats . . . before chapel. I never even noticed them when I sat down. Kids have been advocating for a condom machine somewhere on campus. . . .

Several chapels I went to did take on the school about an issue. In one a clearly well-liked student, Peter Mudd, in a good-natured, but still serious and even occasionally strident tone, exhorted the school to take dialogue and participatory democracy seriously. In his view, the school claimed to invite differences of opinion and inclusion of disagreement, but only on the surface. What substantive changes was the school really willing to make and how seriously did they really take the students' ideas, he asked. He followed his questions with concrete suggestions for changes that could be made. Passionate, critical, and constructive, his talk went well beyond mere venting. Pictures of his chapel follow on the next two pages, reflecting both the spirit of camaraderie and good cheer present and the intensity of Peter's appeal to his community (figures 11.1 &11.2).

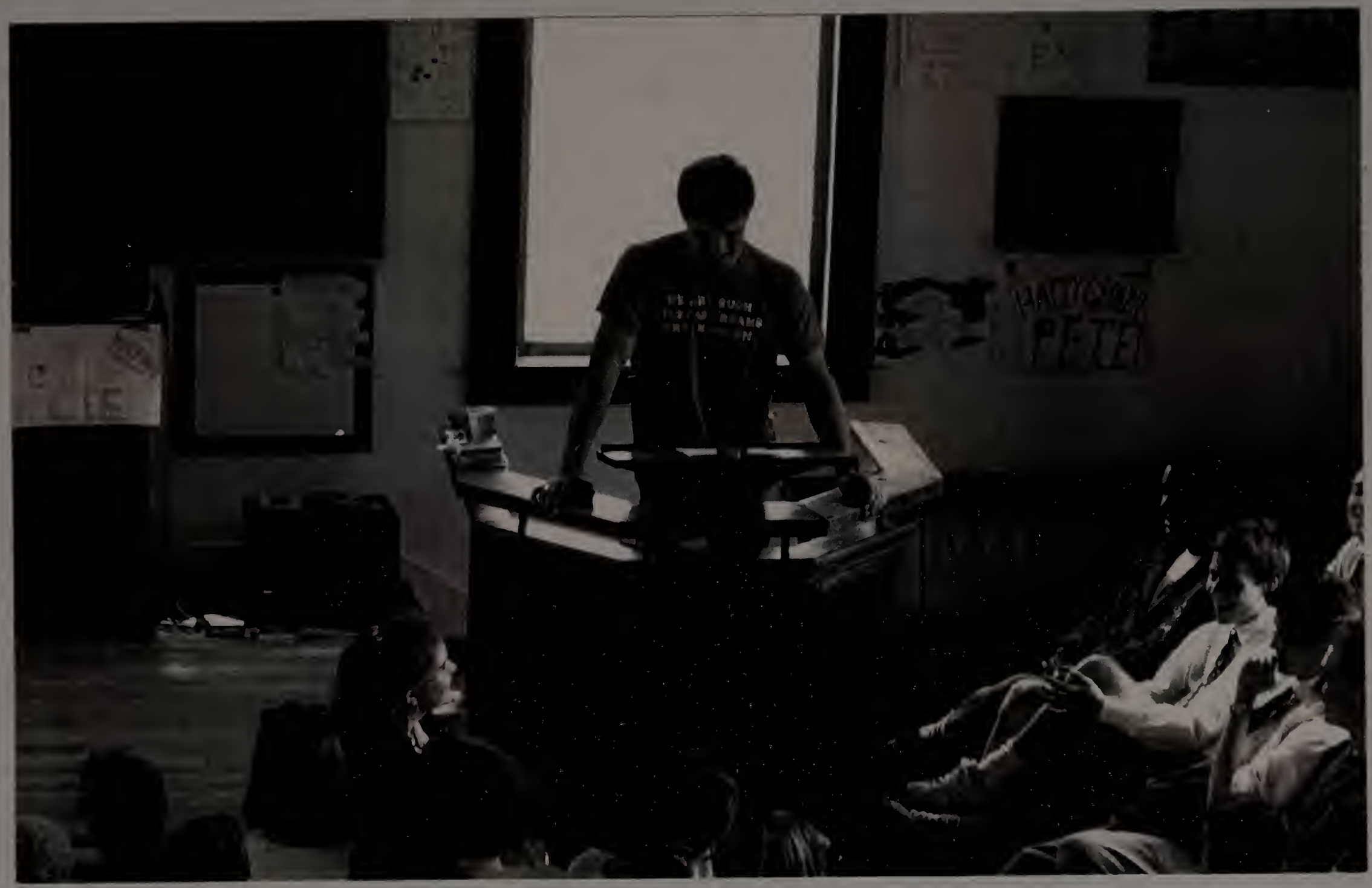

Figure 11.1. A Festive Morning Chapel Atmosphere

Figure 11.2. Senior Peter Mudd '91 Takes on the School in His Chapel.

Later, I encountered a student looking at these very pictures in my exhibit in the hall by the classrooms at C.A. He told me that Peter's was the best chapel all year. Moments later an adult came by and, to my surprise, said how wrong Peter was about the school, as if there were a right and wrong. Part of me wondered if that comment confirmed Peter's very point. For me it confirmed that criticism, and scathing criticism at that, is hard to hear when you think it's aimed at you.

Wide-Ranging Purposes & Issues

English teacher Clare Nunes noted about student chapels:

> Sometimes it's a blistering confession and sometimes it's a blistering accusation. And while all of us may not <u>like</u> what we hear, we are bound to <u>respect</u> it.
>
> Some students will vent their spleen, or vent their wrath on the community. . . . I remember my second year here, when a student told the whole community, she told the whole school, all the students, that they didn't know what they were doing, that they were just going to college and following that pattern because that's what they thought they were supposed to do. But they didn't really mean it and they didn't know what they were doing.
>
> And it went on. She was sitting in a chair facing us. Then she got up and stomped out, leaving an empty chair. And I happened to be watching the students come out at the end and they were stricken. Whether they took it personally or not, the spectacle of all that wrath they found poisonous.

Later she remarked that the chapel:

> . . . has been used as therapy, or, sometimes, I think, to punish. I think that some of it is a striking back . . . at the world maybe . . . And very often it's been used as a weapon . . . The Black students have used it to tell us off . . . to show the community . . . to affirm that, for self-affirmation. And to say, "It's been tough and you have <u>made</u> it tough. And we've somehow gotten through anyhow . . . Almost without exception.

<u>An Example: Amani's Chapel on Race</u>. A powerful chapel I attended was given Amani Willet, my own son's best friend. In his chapel, Amani, who is bi-racial, wove stories of his personal experience of racism with a call for school policies to more fully include and attend to all races. The chapel seems to invite people to weave their own personal stories into issues they take on. The personal becomes political and the political personal. Amani opened his chapel with stories of encounters he had had, one with a

student at Concord asking him why his skin was so dark, and another with an undercover store detective who scared him by following him throughout the store. Amani's companion in the store at first couldn't believe they were being followed, and both boys didn't dare leave the store for fear this threatening looking person might follow and accost them. In Amani's own words:

> Has anyone out there ever walked into a store and had the security guard follow them around, gotten into an elevator and had the person next to them clutch their handbag a little tighter or had someone cross the street when you walk a little too close to them at night?

Amani talked of growing up in Africa, nearly dying as a young child, and then returning to the U.S. and growing up in a multi-cultural setting where people were excited about the adventure of learning about each other's differences. Then he came to his C.A. experience.

> As odd as it may seem, I have found that many of my bad experiences here have been more important and more beneficial to me than my better ones. I think that this is because CA has made me realize, confront and sort out a lot of problems, at least in my own mind. I have never encountered a place where people are so quick to assume things about one another. It seems that students assume that everybody in the white community is wealthy, intelligent and owns a house somewhere in the suburbs and that all the students in the black community are on full scholarship, are intellectually inferior, are from the inner-city and listen solely to rap music.
>
> For my entire first year at CA I felt trapped somewhere in between. I'm not incredibly wealthy and I don't live in the suburbs, yet at the same time I'm not from the inner-city and I didn't like rap music. The white kids couldn't figure me out because I didn't fit the mold of what they thought a black kid ought to be and the black kids thought that I fit the mold of a white person too much. I was caught in between two extremes and I was damn confused.

Later in his chapel, Amani talked specifically about steps the school had taken to embrace multi-culturalism, but noted that these were just a beginning. He outlined precisely what changes he make in the curriculum, the Admissions Committee, and in the willingness of students and faculty alike to confront racism and exclusion in order to change them.

For a school that prides itself on welcoming diversity and dialogue, it was hard, but important to hear. And the response was almost immediate. Maybe it had been brewing

already anyway, but Amani's talk certainly added focus, immediacy, and urgency to the school's concern about diversity. Almost immediately open meetings were held involving students, faculty, administrators and parents, not just to air feelings and concerns, but to search for solutions. Funds were committed to implement the group's best ideas. An ongoing task force was put in place, and staffing, curriculum, and admissions committee changes were later implemented with surprising dispatch.

A Chapel on Date Rape. Other powerful examples of individual chapels having both personal and social impact were shared with me by those I interviewed. In one case Tom Wilcox told about a moving chapel given by a student who shared the horror and anguish of having been raped. Then, with the student's permission, he retold her story at a talk he was scheduled to give soon after at Middlesex, a nearby secondary school. He completely rewrote his speech and shifted his topic to focus on date rape. As he tells it, with the power of the student's story underpinning his talk, and emboldened by her example in speaking out, he was able to talk about this difficult topic with a conviction, candor, and courage he might never have been able to summon otherwise.

Kevin Jennings' Chapel & Coming Out. One especially powerful faculty chapel, was mentioned to me by several people. Time after time a student or faculty member would say, "Have you heard about Kevin Jennings's chapel?" In this renowned chapel, Kevin came out as a gay man teaching at the school. It was the first time at Concord Academy that anyone had come out in public, in a chapel about their homosexuality. I asked Kevin if he felt that giving a chapel was at all empowering for him. He replied:

> Oh completely! Yuh. I think part of the reason why it's seen as such a powerful chapel is it was really a momentous kind of occasion in the life of the school. You know, no one had gotten up in that chapel talking about being gay before. . . . Just because of its role in the life of the school, I think that . . . chapel is seen as an incredible step. And it was very empowering for me. It was very empowering for me. Particularly the student reception afterwards.
>
> I was really terrified. I mean, I remember going into the bathroom over by the dining hall and taking my blue blazer off and I had just giant sweat things. I was incredibly anxious. I mean, one of the things you probably can't put in

your thesis, there was a lot of dialogue between me and [others] about whether or not this chapel was ever going to be given. And it pretty much got to the point where I said, "I'm giving this chapel. End of story."

And it was within, kind of, circles around here, everybody knew what was coming. . . . It was very tense, tense, tense. There was one faculty member in particular who said that my chapel should have been optional, that there should have been signs on the door saying what I was gonna talk about and that people shouldn't have to come if they didn't want to hear it . . . So there was a tremendous level of tension around my first chapel. And I think that there was a lot of feeling on a lot of part of the people also who were kind of <u>for</u> me, that this was . . . if I blew it, I was gonna set this issue back at the school forever . . . A lot was riding on it. I think that's why it gets mentioned a lot, actually. And I think that it was incredibly empowering for me because the kids just overwhelmed me afterwards, an incredible number of kids.

That was really an important moment in my career here, where I felt like I was gonna be accepted for who I was. And I think that that is what the chapel does for a lotta kids, too, is they, they test out whether or not they're gonna be accepted for who they are. It was very empowering for me. I think the real thing of the chapel, in terms of a chapel as a talk, the writing process is the most important part, because you have to pull together . . . I find that it's the process of assessing where you are in your life and everything that is really the most valuable thing. . .

So, it is a very empowering forum. And it really is a watershed, too. I really think of my time at Concord Academy as before my first chapel and after my first chapel. I really feel like I didn't really start teaching here until after that first chapel, because I don't feel like people really knew me until I gave that first chapel.

This first chapel of Kevin's achieved such renown that the next time he gave a chapel, two years later, students hung huge sheets and signs to honor him and his chapel (figures 11.3 & 11.4, next page). Since that time both students and other faculty have come out as gay at the school and the entire is sue has been more openly discussed and considered. Kevin went on in the next few years to become one of the most sought-after spokespeople about homophobia in the entire private school world and even more recently has written and published about the subject. Since then, too, some students at Concord have also gone on to take leading roles in bringing homophobia into more clear public consciousness and working to overcome it.

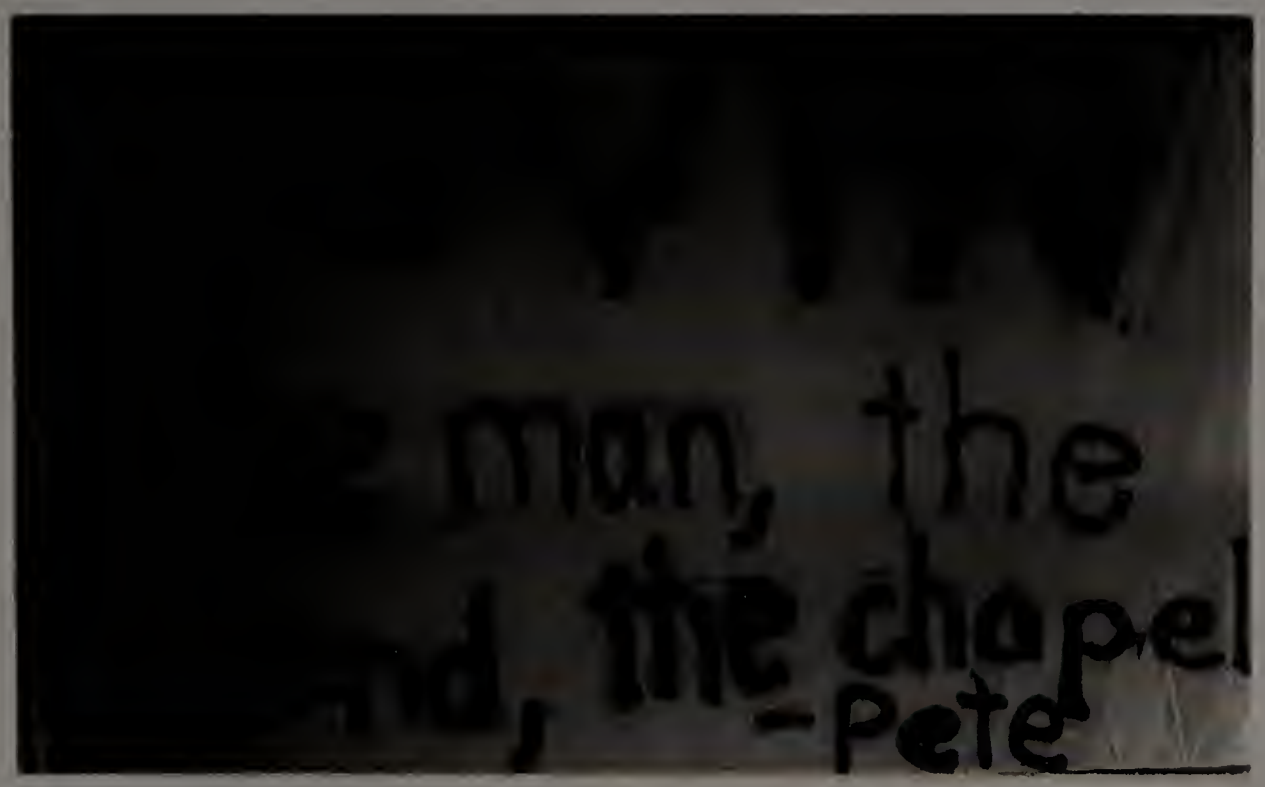

Figure 11.3. Sheet Hung from the Balcony for Kevin Jennings's 2nd Chapel

Figure 11.4. A Large Sign Attached to the Podium

When I asked Kevin if he thought his chapel had anything to do with his becoming a public spokesperson about homophobia, the conversation went like this:

Me: I'm curious, too, if it mattered to you. . . I mean, it feels like to me it also made a difference in your being able to be a spokesperson about this whole issue.

Kevin: Uh-huh.

Me: You know?

Kevin: Also it just made it was me being able to be myself, period. That's what it mainly did. Um . . . I was just much more Kevin Jennings after my chapel than I was before. And I felt the same way about the chapel this year. I mean, I'm curious if you heard any reactions from anybody about this year's one, because I really felt I was coming out in another way this year.

Me: Mmmm. Yuh, I felt that way too, about your chapel. Yuh. Although people don't mention this year's as much.

Kevin: Huh. Which is funny, cause in many ways this year's was more difficult, in some ways. Like in, I mean, I had no doubt, when I gave the first chapel, that what I was talking about was important and needed to be talked about. And I didn't have any shame around . . . You know, it was this question of kind of me against these people who didn't want to hear this talked about. And doing the second one really was conquering my own self to do it, instead of conquering some outside self.

Coming Out re. Culture & Class. This second chapel of Kevin's was an extraordinary story of his own struggle to acknowledge and come to terms with his background coming from a Southern, poor, racist family. He told of his mother's education cut short because the family didn't believe in education, especially for women. He spoke movingly about her commitment to his own education, and her kitchen confrontation with his Klu-Klux Klan uncle whose cronies had shot at the integrated school bus young Kevin had ridden to school on the first day of forced integration. He remembered her standing up defiantly to his uncle and saying, "If anything happens to Kevin, I'll hold you personally responsible." After that, no more shots were fired at the school bus.

He talked of eventually going to Harvard and trying to change his accent so he wouldn't be derided as a southerner — of trying to erase his connection to his own family, remembering, as he did, his father preaching hatred and racism from a southern pulpit. Gradually he talked of how, only now, was he beginning to come to terms with it, to acknowledge it, and to unravel it. To name it, own it, and realize it as some critical,

though painful, connection to himself. And he brought his story full circle, to pull in his experience at Concord Academy, especially around issues of class and inclusion, and the easy tendency there is in a place like Concord to downplay differences, to acknowledge only the safe, acceptable aspects of our lives.

My Involvement as Chapel Receiver. I was there for Kevin's second chapel. It was intense, moving, and powerful. There was no way to be just an observer. All of us were participants, each in our own way. Each touched, moved, changed in our own ways. I had been planning to go into M.I.T. to spend the day in their library. But Kevin's chapel started the day, and after it there was no way I could drive into Cambridge and settle down to some books. For me his chapel was so deep and so real, so completely absorbing, that it made me want to stop and take stock. It made me want to spend the whole day focusing on the chapel and what it means. It made me decide to spend the whole day traveling to New Hampshire to seek out the chapel's origins. But that is another story.

In Kevin's chapel, for the first time I joined the line of well-wishers to thank and hug the chapel-giver. For the first time I felt compelled to go beyond field notes and more expository descriptions to myself about what had taken place. So I wrote a poem for Kevin, for myself, for all of us. Maybe one of the things the poem is about is that naming who we are, remembering who we are, embracing who we are, is the first step on a long journey home, and a vital step in taking us beyond that home as well, to understand something of how we fit. I would like to share that poem with you as well, so I offer it here.

Knife-sharp flint edge
Tempered in a too-hot fire.
Rage kindled by insistent ember.
Time frozen —
Seared in memory like a brand
That never will grow over.

Til past burns hot as present,
Firing our vision, piston to our drive.
So battles won and ground held fast
Secure this land we plant our feet on.
Held firm, to anchor our resolve.
Histories not often shared or spoken
Not writ except as song.
Not recognized by those who speak of knowing
Not meant to form the pillars of our lives.
So we, in easy conscience, would deny them,
Remaking ourselves in images remote,
More easily contrived to fit.
Until one day we wonder who we are,
And asking, stoke coals we'd thought were ashes
Long since grown cold and gray as dust.
Surprised how hot they glow, beneath appearance,
How readily they welcome us with warmth,
Invite us to embrace ourselves,
Like fire dancing draws us into dream.
Just so we might remember who we are
And whence our own fire's burn began.

A part of me wondered if I might be presumptuous to send this poem to Kevin. Yet it was written for him. Then, too, I thought, am I stepping over the line as researcher or quasi-participant? And why not? Why not engage and participate more fully? The power of Kevin's chapel and the power of experiencing that was an immediate, pressing catalyst. I felt compelled to respond. The intensity and "reality" that one person expresses in his or her chapel creates an opening for others to step into. Even now, as I remember that experience, I pause. I take stock. I feel his meaning resonating still. Chapels let outsiders in. Chapels sink in and offer people immediate, direct encounter that bypasses the layers of protection and distance society would have us so readily and automatically assume.

A Chapel Charges Faculty Sexual Abuse. One powerful and controversial chapel that happened during my study was one that I did not attend, but heard about. One student spoke on behalf of his sister and several of her friends who had gone to Concord and graduated before him. Once safely out of school, they all spoke of a particular faculty member making sexual advances to them. Now this boy, as a brother and a friend, chose the forum of his chapel to confront the school about it.

As one can imagine, a great hubbub ensued. Denials were quick and confident. Assurances were sent out that there was no cause for alarm. Cautions were advised against premature judgment or assuming guilt without due cause, full information, or careful deliberation. Later confidence was expressed that the matter had been thoroughly researched, concluding that there was no substance to the allegations and that these are matters where intentions and actions can easily be misconstrued. And yet, whether connected to this chapel or not, it was not long after that this faculty member left the school. In the case of this chapel, the personal became highly political, with the clear intention to have a dramatic, undeniable sociopolitical impact on the school as a whole and on the administration and this faculty member in particular.

An Intimate Family Revelation. Another person I spoke with, Mary Murray Coleman, talked about her daughter's chapel, which she attended both as a mother and as a staff member at the school. In her words:

> For me the chapel has always been an extraordinarily emotional place, from the moment I set foot in it and read — I happen to love the passage that's on that plaque. And it has continued to be an extraordinarily personal place for me. For me, personally, I go there quietly when I need time and I know it's going to be empty. And I can spend time with myself without interruption. I've gone there with a couple of faculty members when something on this campus has been just . . . the death of a child . . . I can feel what it feels like to be there. It's just an extraordinarily quiet place for me.
>
> The younger of my two [children] . . . gave her chapel in the chapel. She did not tell me ahead of time what it was going to be about and told me that she wanted me to be there and that it would be very painful. And it was. I knew what she would talk about. . . . Her Dad died and I remarried and it was a disaster, in every possible way. I made a mistake. I learned a lot; I still can't see the good parts of it . . . But anyway, Meems in her chapel talked about the abusive man that I had married, in front of the whole community.

> And it was hard to hear, but it was true. So, what is true is always hard to hear, very hard to hear. And rather than feeling angry at her, it gave us a chance to start talking in a way that we hadn't and is still going on. Much better now, in fact. . . . In any event . . . the community surrounded her with love and affection . . . and me as well. This community had watched me get married and divorced to this man. And I certainly didn't share who he was here or what had happened. But people that knew me certainly did know. So it's always been this intensely personal and emotional place for me. And I cherish the fact that it's here and is available to everybody.

Mary Murray Coleman told me this story on one of my very first visits to Concord Academy to meet and talk with people about the chapel. That and other things she said were so real for me, so direct, heartfelt, and powerful, that I really think it set the tone for my entire study. Like a chapel, it catapulted me into a place of direct encounter and authenticity that went way beyond polite, distant, careful conversation. While it was not what I expected, I would not trade it for anything in this world.

I was to come back and talk with Mary Murray and visit with her time and again during this work, knowing that whenever I talked with her I was on real and solid ground — simply as a person, engaged now in something much more than an academic, arms-length "study." She went on to tell me that sometime after her daughter's chapel, her daughter decided to press charges against her step-father, leading to a protracted suit which was still underway. Later I was on campus the very day the victory in her suit was announced and the Boston Globe printed a big front-page article on it. It was with pride and a strong sense of encouraging others that there is no shame in being a victim and no reason to hide that she insisted in the Globe, and throughout the ordeal, that her actual name be used and her personal story be told.

So once again, after an initial step of naming the reality and owning it in the safety of the community of Concord Academy as it comes together in the chapel, there is the bolder step of naming and owning that reality in the larger world, and not just naming it, but taking concrete action to change it, to intervene in a public and dramatic way so that the injustice is recognized and people involved are held accountable. The personal becomes powerfully political. Freire's naming, reflecting, politicizing and acting are played out.

Mary Murray Coleman herself was so pivotal for me in this study, and so emblematic of the best that Concord Academy is — frank, open, heartfelt, wonderfully resilient, warmly caring and receptive, thoughtful, insightful, humorous, and infinitely generous with her time, that I would be entirely remiss not to share more of her as a person with you here. She is tall and lanky, with a distinctly New England air of warm irony, coupled with an easy, disarming way of going right to the heart of things. Her picture follows (figure 11.5) so perhaps you can imagine all these traits rolled up into this exceptional woman.

Figure 11.5. Mary Murray Coleman, C.A. Admissions 1976-1993

Community Meetings in the Chapel

Although most people I spoke with who are at C.A. now think primarily of individual student and faculty chapels when they think of the chapel, many people also wanted me to be sure to know about gatherings that had happened in response to community crises. They described school-wide gatherings in the chapel: one after the Gulf War broke out and another in response to the Los Angeles riots following the Rodney King beating. First the war:

The Gulf War

> Sometimes when there are issues (I hate the word), but things of monumental importance, we will meet there as a community. . . . We met right after the war started, in the Middle East, there and it was like a Quaker meeting. . . . It was like everybody giving an individual five minute chapel, though they stood in place and just talked. And nobody was rebutting or answering or arguing with. It was just thoughts and important to hear. Um, and I think it is, at its very best, at the heart of this place, because of the trust that is implied if you are allowed to speak in front of your classmates, your schoolmates, and teachers, and dorm parents, in any way you choose. (Mary Murray Coleman, Admissions Director)

> At the outbreak of the war we had an all-school meeting in the chapel. It felt closer, more intimate, more secure in there. And at the very end — we had planned a day of discussion or something — and suddenly it was over and people had left over feelings that needed to be talked about. We met in the chapel and held what was intended to be really just a Quaker style meeting. Nobody's conducting it. No panel. If you have a comment, stand up and say it. No one can argue with it. No one can say you're wrong. You can only stand up and say what <u>you</u> feel about it, how <u>you</u> reacted, how you feel, how your feelings change. Whatever you want. But that was wonderful because a whole range of opinions were expressed, without anybody being sneered at. And this place tends to get awfully politically correct from time to time, so that only certain points of view are tolerated and other ones are not. And that day there was a very wide range. It was, I'd say, the greatest sense of community I've felt in a couple of years. . . And I'm sure part of it was because it was in the chapel. . . . When you're in the chapel, you're all one. And there's just no question about it. You are one community. (Katy Rea Schmitt, CA Science teacher & alumna, CA '62)

Response to the war did not stop there. Some C.A. students and faculty began a daily morning protest and vigil on the Concord Town Common. A whole cluster of students went immediately into Boston and Cambridge, gathering at Harvard and

marching through the city, picking up students at Boston University, Boston and Latin High School, and elsewhere. They marched on the busiest roads — taking Memorial Drive, four lanes of fast-moving traffic where even cars take their chances. At strategic intersections, the entire march lay down in the street, blocking traffic, forcing drivers to stop business as usual — not for a moment or two, but for fifteen and twenty minutes at a time. It took the march four hours to reach City Hall. By then they were thousands strong. This was not reported on the evening news.

Rodney King & L.A. Riots

I happened to be at the school the day many gathered in the chapel in response to the Rodney King beating and Los Angeles riots. Several students had prepared brief informational pieces to share with the community. Then the floor was opened for people to air their views and express their feelings. Here there was some back and forth between students, in part, it seemed, because feelings were raw and opinions conflicted. As a whole, however, the tenor of the meeting was somber, troubled, and anxious. Yet the spirit of embracing dialogue as an avenue for dealing with crisis seemed strong. Nevertheless, there was also a sense that many were too troubled or overcome to actually speak. At the same time I sensed an underlying common desire for answers and a search for clarity. The meeting began with history teacher Kevin Jennings saying:

> It is important to understand that we, the people, are in the end responsible for the success or failure of this experiment. We have the power and the right to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. We must decide how we will use that power and what we shall do with our rights, should we wish to see that liberty secured for our nation. As with any experiment, the success of it is not assured simply because we set out on it. It is only assured because those of us who care about it work together to insure that it takes place and that it's carried through to fulfill the promise made in Philadelphia 200 years ago.
>
> We asked for today's meeting because it is obvious that we have reached a crisis point in our nation, from the footage you've seen, where we need to talk with each other as Americans, to understand what is happening in our nation, why it is happening, and how we can move forward from here in order to fulfill the principles laid out in our constitution.

The meeting went on for some time, with people clearly upset and concerned, and with a spirit of healthy dialogue. It closed with a student saying, "Yes, it's good that we say how we feel and what we think, but if that's all we do, what will we really have changed?" He urged everyone to write to Congress and push this past just talking with one another to try to effect change at a public governmental level. The political affects people personally. They come together to consider those effects in concert. Then they move past personal response to political action. Or one hopes they do.

The next picture (figure 11.6) shows a portion of that meeting, toward the end when many people had left and a smaller group remained to continue talking. Several shots are combined to give some sense of the space and beams. The Corinthians 1:13, with its powerful theme of love, forms such a prominent, telling backdrop for the group.

Figure 11.6. Meeting in the Chapel After Rodney King & L.A. Riots

When J.F.K. Was Shot

These were not the first times the school had gathered in the chapel in a time of crisis. An alumna from 1966, Rachel Duane Lee, who played the organ in chapel during her time at Concord, told me this story:

> The other incident I remember and associate with the chapel is November 22nd, 1963, when JFK was shot. I heard the news out in front of the school building. I remember Miss Mendenhall standing, shocked. I remember the fear. At that point he'd been shot, but wasn't dead. The President's been shot was the message. I went to Mrs. Wight, who was the French teacher. She taught very beginning French. And I went to her. She was trying to explain something to one of her students who was leaving and I was standing at the door trying to talk to her about it. She knew that he'd been shot, but she wanted to get this little lesson across to the student before the student heard. She didn't want the student to be devastated.
>
> So I waited until . . . and then I told her, had she heard the news. She spoke to me in French and my French was not as clearly advanced as she was speaking. I remember her telling me that I had a good head on my shoulders and I should help people keep their heads and she, like, gave me this mission. I didn't know what that meant.
>
> I left her classroom and came down to the chapel. Other people were here already. There were three or four people here. One, who was Catholic, was on her knees here at the steps, praying. I went over to the organ and wanted to make some music and picked out the hymn, "Turn back Oh man, forget thy foolish ways, old now is earth . . . and none may count her days." It is a hymn that we sang regularly. Everybody knew the words to it. I played it and got to the end of it and said to myself, "It's very comforting to hear that music." I said, "I don't know another hymn that says it better and I don't want to give a concert now, but I want to keep the music going." I said, "I'll just play it again."
>
> So I played it a second time (pause). . . and I didn't want it to stop. It was so comforting. . . I started praying as I was playing it, saying, "If I can just keep playing it and if everybody, if it can empower the people here to feel that message, that it is stupid, this violence — if everybody can just focus and pray, simultaneously around the world, but here, if this can help people pray, maybe he'll live. Then I got into some sort of magical thinking that if I could keep going and repeating this, playing it until the last person had left the chapel, and then, when the last person was gone I could stop the music, maybe just that energy would somehow be part of the prayer and wish that he would make it.
>
> So for two hours, Daria, people started coming in. There were three or four when I started to play, and then there were five or ten. Then the chapel was filled. People sat and cried. Some did come up to the altar and got on their knees. And it was just a quiet, constant music. . . that was sustaining. When the last person left and I closed the, locked up the organ . . . I went back to Jenny . . . She was in the living room where our room was, watching the news. The TV was on and the newscaster said something about the "late President." I remember saying, "the late President? I've been praying and he

couldn't have died. I put all this energy in. He couldn't have died." And Jenny thought I was nuts.

These special moments of spontaneous community gathering seem rare and I believe they gain in import because of that. Gatherings of this sort do not happen for any old thing. They focus and unite the community in times of great trouble or crisis. They are not taken lightly. If they happen once or twice in a student's tenure at C.A. is a lot. Students each give a senior chapel only once — once in a lifetime. Partly because of that rarity, senior chapels have been elevated to the status of a rite of passage. Similarly, for spontaneous school-wide gatherings to happen frequently in the chapel would demean their power and importance. These few meetings around the Gulf War and L.A. riots were mentioned repeatedly by participants as moments of great meaning and strong community in the chapel. By contrast, a more recent tendency to call meetings in the chapel to address particular incidents or issues at the school has been criticizeded as inappropriately donning the cloak of community or of import that the chapel reserves for critical and telling moments. We will return to this later.

Safety, trust, gathering, community — all common threads woven into the tapestry that is the chapel. Sometimes, as here, in Rachel's story of J.F.K., the focus is almost completely on community, or the chapel as an oasis for community. Individuals come together in order to be together, to gain strength and solace from coming together. Sometimes they share words, sometimes music, sometimes just space and silence. But if the chapel is about anything, it is about sharing. Students, faculty, and administrators alike sharing their sorrow, their fear, their care for each other, for their school, for their society. Sharing their stories.

Collective Chapels: Senior Baccalaureates

A Series of Mini-Chapels

Sometimes the stories in chapels seem so self-interested that they can seem self-indulgent. And, indeed, the balance between individuality and community can be precarious. In a way, the Baccalaureate at the end of each year compresses the range of senior chapels that happen throughout the year. Here seniors offer a sequence of brief statements or performances in the chapel to friends, family and the rest of the school. Some presentations are given by small groups or pairs. Others are single students, standing alone. The Baccalaureate swings moment to moment from personal to political, from therapy to performance, from diatribe to confession. Family, friends, and some classmates and teachers are crammed into the chapel. Others sit nestled close to the chapel outdoors, listening to loudspeakers. It is like a last good-bye that the seniors give to the school, just before graduation, like mini-chapels rolled into one final community gathering.

The Baccalaureate I went to was extraordinary. Seniors came up to the podium and spoke, or performed on the raised area beneath the carving, each for a few moments only. One boy sang in a powerfully moving operatic voice, with an intensity and beauty that moved many of us to tears. Two girls came and shared the podium, one blond and white-skinned, from North American and Northern European heritage, the other dark-haired, dark-eyed, and dark-skinned, with forebears from India. They spoke of how different they were on the surface, and how similar inside. They were more alike than different, they said, and their similarities were more important to them than their differences.

Two Black Women On Race

Others spoke as well and performed, but for me these were swept clear out of my memory by the sudden power and finality of the two girls — no, the two women — who

closed the entire service. These two seniors stood before the gathering, standing straight and tall, out from behind the podium on the raised platform, right in the center, with the carving behind them. Their voices rang out clear and crisp, without a waiver or a quiver, without a nervous cough or pause, with a strength and a conviction that demanded a hearing. They spoke as a duet, first one, then the other, and the first words they uttered were a string of racial epithets, shouted out one after the other, from "Nigger" to a range of labels I hardly recognized. Then they continued, alternating short phrases or sentences, talking about how, being Black, they were treated as "other," as not the norm. They described what it was like for them, trying to adapt to this mostly White, mostly upper-class setting.

From the moment they began the chapel became dead silent — shocked, it seemed — stunned even. It was almost as if we were holding our breath collectively. Their words went on, strong and stinging, with a bite made sharp for hitting so close to home. As they closed, each turned away from the front, sideways, back-to-back, their final words spoken facing the side walls of the chapel, as if to say, we are speaking to these walls because we wonder if you are really listening. We wonder if we might not have been speaking, just as well, all this time, to walls. They said, in closing that it seemed to them that it was not that the community wanted to know them, to embrace them, to celebrate them, but rather that it wanted them to adapt to this setting they found themselves in, wanted <u>them</u> to change, <u>them</u> to adjust. A one way proposition.

Their words were carefully chosen, striking and strident (poems, I realized later). Not safe, accommodating words. Not polite words circling round the problem, but arrows flying straight and true and meant to score a hit. In strength and clear conviction, without apology, they asserted their right to be taken on their own terms, to be known on their own terms, accepted on their own terms, grounded in their own reality. Take it or leave it. They had not come to Concord Academy to learn to be someone else, but to come into their own fullness as human beings, as Black girls growing into Black women,

carrying their backgrounds and experiences and culture with them — defining them in their own right, not through their difference from others, or their variation from this dominant theme around them. You want us to know you, to become like you, but you don't really want to know us, they asserted.

This all happened in a few moments, the last speakers in a whole program of presentations. But it was like a call to arms or being taken to task. Personally and collectively it could not be ignored. Their words and whole presentation still resonate and unsettle me. Diversity, it says to me, a word we so easily speak, a concept so easily embrace, but how is it really played out in our lives, both personally and institutionally?

The Right to Define Yourself. In a courageous resistance to the niche they saw C.A. trying to carve out for them and to the definitions they felt Concord imposing on them, these young women defiantly claimed their right to define themselves. They joined a strong heritage of Black women before them. I see immediate parallels here with bell hooks's, Patricia Hill Collins's, and others' work on black women and feminism. As Patricia Hill Collins writes: "Behind the mask of behavioral conformity imposed on African-American women, acts of resistance, both organized and anonymous, have long existed" (1991, p. 9). In Freire's terms, these students were claiming their role as subjects, rather than objects. Collins writes about challenging "the externally defined controlling images used to justify Black women's objectification as the Other," (1991, p. 100) and "advancing Black women's empowerment through self-definition" (1991, p. 95). Collins writes:

> The insistence of Black female self-definition reframes the entire dialogue from one protesting the technical accuracy of an image . . . to one stressing the power dynamics underlying the very process of definition itself. By insisting on self- definition, Black women question not only what has been said about African-American women but the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define. When Black women define ourselves, we clearly reject the assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to interpret our reality are entitled to do so. Regardless of the actual content of Black women's self-definitions, the act of insisting on Black female self-definition validates Black women's power as human subjects. (1991, p. 106-107)

Closing: Where We've Been & Where We're Going

Social Identity, Marginality, & Voice

So the chapel becomes a crucible for both individual personal, social, and community identity to be forged. Those most readily defined as outsiders or "other" by the dominant culture of the school and the society — people of color, homosexuals, poor or working class students, seem to feel their social identities most keenly. Many have the courage to use their chapels to grapple with what those identities mean in this private school setting once steeped in wealth and white Protestant tradition.

For some, as we have seen, the chapel offers a critical step in publicly coming to grips with one's social identity. Indeed, it seems almost like a launching pad from which some gain the strength and support to venture into increasingly more public and more socially loaded arenas. Taking risks among colleagues, friends, and peers in the context of a small, supportive school, in the most intimate and personal setting within the school — giving a chapel — seems to offer people validation, increasingly strong connections to each other, and affirmation of their own identities and experiences, as they see and present them to each other. These are powerful beginnings to give some the confidence, strength, and optimism to tackle even greater challenges in settings perceived as far less safe or supportive — be these other schools, Governor's councils, the news media, or the legal system.

Personal Identity & Communal Therapy

For others personal identity predominates over social identity, and the chapel becomes an opportunity to share that identity, almost like communal therapy. Referred to as "sacred," however, the entire experience goes well beyond simple gossip or whispered revelation. As people describe chapels as both listeners and speakers, the experience as a whole is clearly extra-ordinary. It holds many of the qualities that Abraham Maslow

associates with an exceptional state of being fully alive and having what he calls "peak experiences."

Next Steps

The next chapter explores the chapel in relation to self-actualization and "peak experience"(Maslow, 1968, 1971). It also considers the role of tension in growth and development and in the chapel. Resistance is also discussed, both to the status quo and to chapels themselves. The chapter closes by looking at the chapel as refuge and haven for solitude. All are cast in relation to empowerment.

CHAPTER 12

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PEAK EXPERIENCE, RESISTANCE, & SOLITUDE

"Do not pose in your own presence."
— André Gide, Journal, 1947

Chapter Overview

This chapter looks at three parallel ways in which the chapel relates to empowerment: through peak experience and self-actualization (Maslow, 1968, 1971); through resistance and tension; and through solitude. While each of these is different, they are not incompatible. Each amplifies our consideration of empowerment through the chapel and offers a more multi-faceted view of how empowerment comes into play.

Peak Experience, Self-Actualization & the Chapel

Maslow's Peak Experience & Self-Actualization

In Abraham Maslow's search for what it means to be fully human, blossoming in the most positive, rich ways that he can find, he identifies peak experience as a condensation of the fullness of positive being. As Maslow sees it, people routinely have peak experiences who are highly "self-actualizing," living out the best of their aspirations and potential (1971). The ability to regularly experience life at a peak seems to be a big part of what it means to be self-actualizing for Maslow. Others who are not yet self-actualizing may have peak experiences only occasionally, but even so these are critical events with powerful meaning and import for those experiencing them. The chapel as an experience seems surprisingly parallel to Maslow's description of peak experience. We will explore just a few of the similarities here.

Time/Space Disorientation. Maslow describes peak experience as involving acute and amplified perceptions and temporary "disorientation in time and space. . . . In these moments the person is outside time and space" (Maslow, 1968, p. 80). In chapels, people talk of time and space being suspended, of the speaker being wrapped in a cloak of infallibility, enveloped in a special, almost magical aura. Many chapel-givers report remembering the moments just before their chapel started, and perhaps the first moment or two, but the rest being a blur. Some describe it almost as a dream. Some people made these comments about their own chapels.

> It's hard to talk about giving a chapel, though, because . . . (pause) I don't remember giving my chapel very well, you know. (pause). . . The actual giving it's (pause) it is sort of a blur. At least for me it was a blur. And when I think about, especially the five minutes before my chapel, I can visualize flashes of random people smiling or whatever, but there's no continuous flow in it whatsoever. — Amani Willett, senior, C.A. '93

> Yeah, definitely. Like in my chapel, I can remember the same thing happening to me. Like I remember people coming up to me with signs and stuff, a lot of people like . . . a lot of hugging. And suddenly you figure out what time it is and you figure out like everyone's come into the chapel and it builds up . . . like immediately . . . (pause). And you look out at the audience and you're like, shit, and then . . . (pause) . . . like I panicked. I was, like, "Amani, what time is it?" And he said something like, "Ahh, it's 8:20." And that's what time it's supposed to start and fuck, like, a lot of people were still putting signs up and stuff.
>
> And I was like shit, shit (laughs). So I got up, I was like pissing in my pants. I got up to the podium. I was like, all right, you know. and I took a sip of water or something and tried to calm down. And then I had to, like, it's sort of a sudden, like, launch into this, you know, personal thing and you're not really prepared for it. . . . It sort of sneaks up on you. And then after, I think, the first three sentences, it gets a lot easier. And then it's sort of over very quickly. — Noah Fisk, senior, C.A. '93

> . . . and afterwards, phew, one of the most phantasmagoric scenes ever. It was like a dreamscape — people coming up and giving me hugs and saying, "Congratulations," and "Good job," and things like that. But it was such a heterogeneous mixture. Like, um, you know, one of my friends who I play basketball with, and then someone I barely even know, and then someone from my dorm, and then one of my teachers. And they're all mixed up together. You usually don't see them in, in a context together. It was really strange. . . It was, it was incredible. — Michael Sandler, senior, C.A. '92

> It's kind of overwhelming, actually, to give one, because there's so many people and they're <u>right</u> on top of you, which you don't realize til you're standing there talking. I mean. I barely remember either of mine. I can

> remember just kind of little snatches from both. — Kevin Jennings, history teacher

Heightened Awareness & Intensity. Chapels compress the heightened awareness, focus, and attention that Maslow associates with peak experience — everything is more loaded and intense. As one student described it "the silence is a little thicker" in the chapel. Or as a faculty member recounted, "It's the only moment in the school day when there's absolute silence. . . . As soon as the speaker stands, there is real silence."

People Perceived "In Themselves." And in the chapel, as in the peak experience Maslow describes, people are appreciated and experienced in themselves, for themselves, without judgment, ulterior motive, or expectation on the part of the perceiver. There is an ability to attend to things (or in this case people) "as they really are" with all their uniqueness and particularity. As Joanne Hoffman, Associate Head of the school, noted

> Nobody's saying a word . . . Here's this child revealing some interesting things about himself . . . There is no criticism in the chapel of what is going on. There's absolute acceptance of this person's ability. Talk about empowerment! It's just remarkable!

Zeroing In. The background and host of other associations, the morning rush to arrive, the anticipation of the day's tasks, the labels and pigeon-holes one might otherwise routinely project onto a speaker, all these fall away. Time and space are suspended, the hurley-burley of the world quiets, as this one person becomes the sole focus. It is as if all being is compressed and centered in the now of being that is both the chapel giver and the chapel receivers, wrapped together into this one intense experience that is the chapel. Like Maslow's description of peak experience, "it is as if the figure were isolated for the time being from all else, as if the world were forgotten, as if the precept had become for the moment the whole of Being" (1968, p. 73). As one faculty member put it, "There's no question that it's a moment to savor a particular personality."

Janet Eisendrath, former teacher and one-time acting head of the school had talked of remembering that what we say and do happens at a certain time, in a particular context, and that there is a big difference between being sixteen and being sixty-eight. She talked of the tension in chapels and administratively having to worry about parent reactions, about boundaries and limits and people going too far. But then she said, "You do. You have all those things to remember. . . at the same time, all of those things to forget and listen to what's going on." You let the hubbub of the world fall away and zero in on the here and now, on this very person at this very moment, in and of itself.

Super-ordinate Identity & Fusion as a Whole. In some sense, there is a fusion of the knower and the known. Listeners listen not just with their ears, but with their being. Identification and empathy with the speaker resonate palpably throughout the chapel. At moments the entire chapel seems to hold its breath as one, or to suddenly relax and breathe easily again as one, acutely attuned to the speaker's cadence, nuance, and shift of meaning, intensity, and personal import. The experience involves disparate individuals, but it pulls them together so powerfully sometimes that it takes on a super-ordinate identity as a whole. As noted earlier, C.A. science teacher Katy Rea Schmitt said, "When you're in the chapel you're all one. There's just no question about it. You are one community." French teacher Ron Richardson says of people giving chapels:

> Their statements have become so powerful that it's probably the single . . . can be, uh, not the single most experience, because the experience, the whole experience is what's important to them. But more and more and more it is the thing that people retain about the students and some faculty who opt to give them. But it's very powerful.

Intrinsic Value. Furthermore, chapels, like peak experiences, are considered valid and gratifying in their own right. Chapels are experienced and perceived as ends in themselves, valued, indeed, treasured, in and of themselves, rather than as means to some other ends. Maslow writes that "the peak experience is felt as a self-validating, self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it" (1968, p. 79).

Essential & "Real". Like peak experiences and self-actualizing, which reaches for the best that we can imagine and become, chapels are described as "Concord Academy at its best." As Joanne Hoffman describes it: "For the most part what we have is, every day, this reminder of what we are at our highest, what our ideals are. And we pretty much stretch ourselves to reach those ideals." There is a sense that self-actualizing and peak experiences put people more in touch with their own essence, with the very core of their being. So, too, with the chapel. As English teacher Clare Nunes remarked, "I think the chapel strikes about as close to the bone as you can get to what is the essence of this school."

Sacred. Maslow goes on to describe the peak experience as self-affirming and often awe-inspiring, frequently producing reactions of amazement and humility. Some call the experience sacred. The chapel is no different. To quote Clare Nunes again, "I would say this, that whatever it is, I think it's sacred to Concord Academy." Or, as Joanne Hoffman said, "It's a place that is sacred, but not with a capital 'S', as people like to say around here. And it really is a sacred place." The word "sacred" was mentioned countless times to me in reference to the chapel and to the entire experience of people's chapels — not "religious" some were quick to point out, but nonetheless "sacred." Science teacher and '62 CA alumna Katy Rea Schmitt noted, "Whatever the chapel has is central to something in this school. . . . To me it has always felt like the spiritual center of the school, without being religious."

The Whole Chapel Experience as Peak. So, this host of parallels between Maslow's peak experience and the chapel suggest that some of the power and import of the chapel is wrapped up precisely in its ability to evoke peak experiences for both individuals and for the school as a whole. The combination of characteristics, focused attention, absence of judgment, absorption in the moment and in either speaking or listening, stretching oneself, trying to know others and one's self as they "really" are, being attuned, being fully present — all these combine to make a whole, "sacred" moment

much greater than any of its single parts. All work synergistically to allow people to perceive and express a level of encounter, of "reality," of "essence" that is rare indeed. Or, if we agree with Maslow's characterization, that is rare in all but the most highly evolved and most actively self-actualizing individuals. This comparison suggests, however, that the chapel might well be a cauldron for both individuals and for the community as a whole to work toward self-actualization and toward increasing realization of what it means to be fully alive and abundantly human.

Tension, Resistance, & Rebellion

Tension & Growth

To be alive and more fully human does not mean to be without tension. Indeed, to be alive implies tension and disequilibrium. Perfect equilibrium would be nothing but complete stasis. Ultimately it would be death. Life, on the other hand pushes and pulls, resisting at one moment and catapulting forward at another. Always becoming, its very essence is dynamic imbalance. Sometimes to feel more alive and to know more fully what it is to be alive, we deliberately increase the tension, the imbalance.

Growth & Change vs. Equilibrium. Teenagers, often in a heightened, almost painfully acute state of becoming, seem to feel this compulsion to up the ante and deliberately increase the tension. Humanistic psychologists in particular from Eric Fromm to Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow to Gordon Allport associate healthy growth with tension rather than with equilibrium. For them equilibrium is too easily paired with complacency, while tension leads to development and change. They associate equilibrium with trying to quiet disruptions in people who are considered ill and need fixing, whereas tension, as a stimulus, operates on the premise that people are healthy and strong to start with. The equilibrium model focuses on what is wrong with people, while the growth model focuses on what is right with them. These are fundamentally different approaches

to life itself. As Maslow put it, Freud worked on what made people sick, whereas Maslow was interested in what made them healthy. Gordon Allport (1955) writes:

> Deficit motives . . . call for reduction of tension and restoration of equilibrium. Growth motives, on the other hand, maintain tension in the interest of distant and often unattainable goals.

The positive aspects of tension are most readily apparent to those who believe in people's strengths in the first place, who are attuned to people's powers rather than their lacks.

Creating Tension Deliberately in Chapel

Shock & Offend. Tension and growth can easily take the form for teenagers of struggling to assert an independent identity and to defy whatever norms are felt most pressing. In this process, many a teenager has been known to intentionally and loudly flout convention and authority. At Concord Academy, the chapel frequently becomes a dramatic and compelling opportunity for just such acts of resistance and assertion. As school Head Tom Wilcox remarked, "I've been absolutely torn apart in that building!" Associate Head, Joanne Hoffman recalled, "We've had chapels which have been very challenging and also obscene and difficult. You know, just challenging, demanding. What is that . . . ugh . . . tugging . . . at us for a response."

In one case a student sprinkles condoms all over the pews and launches into a plea for safe sex — forbidden topic, forbidden objects, brashly and proudly displayed. Another student, resisting the tradition of chapels, themselves, as highly personal and revealing, says not a word, and indeed, leaves his own chapel altogether, expecting the entire school to stay and listen, in his absence, to the taped music he has left on. Yet another sprawls on a huge stuffed chair he has placed on the raised area in front of the carving and the "altar" and launches into a continuous string of invectives. Another student who usually appears friendly and jovial purposely begins his chapel with, "I loath, I despise, I hate. . ." going on to offer his darkest thoughts and sentiments, almost

to assure people that he is more multi-dimensional, more complex, more unexpected than they had assumed.

Indeed, some students describe doing things in their chapels simply because they are unexpected or shocking. There is a strong desire to rev things up a notch, to shake things up, to wake people up. Create tension. Remind us that we don't have the answers. We don't know all about the other person, even when we might think we do. As Maslow, again, points out, a healthy affirmation of one's own individuality and unique personhood can manifest as strong resistance to classification and predictability.

Resistance to Norms & Expectations. Resistance to expected norms, then, is one way of asserting one's own individuality and dignity. Lay claim to your right to be the one setting the rules, the one defining who and what you are. Refuse to be pigeon-holed or to easily fit in. Assert your right to shock. If people appear to be overly serious and absorbed in chapels, treat the whole thing as a joke. If others spend months and weeks preparing their chapels, jot yours down at the last second, or ad-lib it. Not surprisingly, this kind of resistance to chapels themselves, rather than to larger issues, was especially prevalent in the early seventies, when so much of the youth and young adults in the U.S. were absorbed in active resistance to institutions and the status quo. Even giving chapel came under fire in as much as it was an established tradition in an institutional setting, albeit an intentionally liberating one.

Violating the Chapel's Sanctity. Vestiges of that resistance are still in evidence today, as students challenge the limits of what is considered acceptable in chapel or in relation to chapel. Two students described to me a dramatic example of resistance to the chapel where its symbolic import was challenged, even ridiculed. They described a recent Senior whose graduation picture showed him splayed out, in the crucifix position, standing on the "altar" in front of the Corinthians 13 carving. Faculty expressed shock and outrage. The students said they were amused, but couldn't treat it all that seriously. The basic instincts to shock, to increase the level of tension, to up the ante, were clearly

intact, and the institution of the chapel was still being challenged, even if the basic institution as a whole was and is embraced by most at the school.

Tension & Vitality. I suspect that if this tension and challenge were not alive, chapels would not be nearly so important to people as they are now. You come into a chapel not knowing what to expect. That, in itself, gets your attention. Whatever is in store, you know it is likely to be more loaded and more intentional than most of our everyday encounters. Whether social diatribe, personal revelation, or witty commentary, chapels are usually double-barreled and meant to hit home. As Henry Giroux elaborates on his book Theory and Resistance in Education (1983), actively creating tension and resistance can be critical steps toward liberation and important ways to fight the domination and hegemony that most institutions and schools represent. Some of the examples at Concord described earlier, dealing with racism, sexism, or homophobia, offer dramatic illustrations of the powerful arena the chapel provides for both active resistance and positive transformation.

Resistance to Chapels Themselves

Clandestine Resistance: Skipping Chapels. At Concord Academy occasionally now, too, reminiscent of the seventies, one sees the form of resistance that tries to discount the importance of chapel altogether. One example is the sophomore who insisted on listening to his walkman throughout chapel, despite admonishment from other class members, from seniors, and from faculty. Another time I had arrived late to a chapel and decided that rather than enter late, I would stop at a local shop for a morning coffee and snack. Sitting in the shop it gradually dawned on me that the three students sitting directly across from me were from Concord Academy and were clearly skipping chapel. Suddenly attentive to their conversation, I realized that the older of the three was rather proudly claiming to routinely skip chapels and to find them a silly indulgence and rather boring at that. The younger two seemed duly impressed with this serious breach of

conduct. All three seemed to revel in expressing their disdain for authority and convention with such apparent nonchalance. To disdain something others so unquestionably laud seemed, by their demeanor and conversation, to place them in their own minds a notch above the rest of the school. Others fall for that silly indulgence, but not us, was the gist of it.

Chapel-Skippers Dismissed In Turn. When I mentioned these examples to other students at the school, they acknowledged them, but dismissed them out of hand. Naive, misguided, misunderstanding what chapel really was, or simply irrelevant were the kinds of responses people assumed of these apparent aberrations. Faculty were sometimes outraged. Students expressed no surprise. Nor did they attach much importance to these acts of resistance or non-compliance. With a shrug they acknowledged that of course there would always be some people like that, and they left it at that. As if to confirm the irrelevance of the examples, some even mentioned how these very students were no longer at Concord Academy, as if they had never fully understood what the school was about. The implication was that it was perfectly fitting that they had left prematurely, for various reasons, some of which boiled down to a presumed fundamental mismatch between the student and the school.

For these who discounted the chapel-skippers, I sensed that to them for students to dismiss the chapel was a grievous breach indeed. This was not seen as simply bucking the administration or even the school as a whole, which was quite common and even fashionable. No. Dismissing chapel altogether by routinely skipping and ignoring it was to disrespect the individuals within the school. By extension it was to disrespect themselves and to be unworthy of serious consideration in return.

The Mock Newspaper Mocks Chapel. Before leaving the topic of resistance to the sanctity of chapel itself, I would be remiss not to mention an article that appeared in the Concord Grape, the spunky, irreverent, alternative school newspaper that flourished in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The article (April, 1992) was entitled "The Chapel: An

Enlightening Tradition or Ego Indulgence?" Seeming tongue in cheek at times and frankly derisive at others, the author questioned whether Seniors actually had anything of value to say. "Do the seniors actually have important notions to relate, or do they simply partake in self-indulgent speeches to feed their egos?"

The writer mocked people for bragging and mocked their friends for showering them with hugs and kisses when in his view nothing substantial had transpired. He chided people for revelations that often embarrassed and hurt unwitting and defenseless family members. He decried chapel signs as nothing but displays of popularity and a waste of paper. He objected to mere swearing, excessive music, and cold winter temperatures in the chapel, and suggested that perhaps the entire tradition should be abandoned in favor of a chance to sleep longer in the morning. But, indeed, he ended with reference to his own chapel, which I quote here to give you a flavor for the intricate way he wove critique, humor, and standing on both sides of the fence into his article.

> . . . Despite this objection, I think I'll fill the chapel when my time comes. I'll talk about my opposition to chapels, and how the school should abandon them. Either that or my trip to Florida, where people sleep on bare mattresses and let their kids grow up before they give speeches. (Phillipe Istanbul, in typical Grape fashion, a pseudonym)

The full page article is offered in the appendix for your enjoyment. The article reminds me that humor is also an effective tool for resistance. Criticism can be more uninhibited and more pointed, often, if cloaked in humor — a point that this author uses to advantage. One senses that he may have taken on the topic of the chapel in part because it was the one thing at the school to escape scathing scrutiny or critique, a point he makes at the outset of his piece. As he put it, "One element of our daily routine . . . is actually liked. It is the concept of the chapel, which has successfully avoided the discussion that other ideas within the community can never avoid." To attack things held most sacred, things presumed to be unassailable, is the ultimate act of resistance.

A Chapel Challenges Chapel Complacency. Sometimes people take on the "sacredness" of the chapel in their chapels, kind of a double-whammy example of

resistance, like having extra-rich German chocolate cake instead of the usual exceptional variety. Josh Cramer's chapel is an example and is available in full in the Appendix. Among other things, Josh demonstrates how humor goes a long way to softening resistance people may have to critiques of things held sacred. Where critique often sets people at odds, humor joins them together again as human beings, laughing at themselves and at each other, with each other — taking themselves less seriously. For your enjoyment, I offer some excerpts from Josh's chapel here and his picture below (figure 12.1).

> Why does everyone feel that they need to give seniorly advice? Be different. Do you believe every word that you hear in this chapel and in this school? Maybe we are all lying to you and force feeding you information that we want you to know. Every fucking person in the world is an egoist. Don't deny it. If you say that you would die for someone else at any instant, you are lying. Maybe I am lying. Is the past tense of to lie, lay or lied? I never get that right.
>
> . . . Censorship sucks. If you don't like what you hear on the radio, then just change the channel. People these days are looking for reasons to be offended. Does this chapel offend you?

Figure 12.1. Josh Cramer, C.A. '92. "If pictures say 1,000 words, why do they have captions?" (Josh's Chapel)

I am also reminded of English teacher Clare Nunes who said that at C.A. they don't criticize chapels, "at least not openly, criticism does not tend to be expressed," or of the sophomore in the drawing class who mockingly said about the chapel, "We're perfect here at Concord Academy."

Selected Chapel Details Critiqued

Chapel Signs. Many of the "Grape" criticisms of the chapel were also voiced by people I interviewed, although they were always quick to point out that these were the down sides of chapels and were more than compensated for by the overall positive aspects of the experience. Chapel signs as a case in point have already been discussed in detail in Chapter 5 (p. 171). To recap briefly, signs have been both lauded and decried, but criticisms relate to: their visual assault; blatant assumption of privilege; loud, insistent character; use as a measure of popularity; and incompatibility with the calm, composed, unintrusive nature of the chapel as a building and a space. Is that about it? While some faculty and alumnae objected to the signs, students seemed to revel in them. In fact, one administrator I interviewed had one of her chapel sings prominently displayed in her office — a reminder, it seemed, of her own chapel and the support and affiliation she experienced there.

Popularity Contests Decried. Some of the same criticisms leveled at signs were mentioned of the "thank you's" that often close chapel talks. People close by thanking their family, their teachers, their friends. But thanking certain people and not others suggests again a popularity contest and introduces the possibility of slighting those not mentioned. Having the speaker's "fan club" sit in the section next to the podium does the same, although I heard no objections to this.

Chapel Critique The Exception. To conclude our discussion of resistance and chapel critique, it seems that while people may have individual and particular criticisms of the details surrounding chapels, these are largely subsumed in the overwhelming

acceptance and enthusiasm that surrounds the chapel as a whole. Exceptions do not go unnoticed — perhaps another mark of the chapel's strength and pervasive symbolic power. One senses that the underlying premise of the chapel, that one's chapel is one's own, to do with as one wishes, cements the place as a primary site of potential resistance and critique. So, in a fundamental sense, for one bent on critique or resistance the chapel would seem to be the one tradition to embrace.

Youthful Cynicism. Psychologist, Eric Erikson sheds some light on the tricky dilemma of adolescence, resistance, and critique, noting that cynicism is often second nature to those in the throes of growing up. Searching for something to believe in, at the same time young people can automatically suspect anything which too easily captures their allegiance. As Erikson describes it, adolescent identity crises involve:

> [the] need for trust in oneself and in others — so the adolescent looks fervently for men and ideas to have 'faith in.' . . . At the same time, however, the adolescent feels a foolish, all too trusting commitment, and will, paradoxically, express his need for faith in loud and cynical mistrust. (1968, pp. 128-129).

As C.A. Headmaster, Tom Wilcox, noted about the chapel as a site of protest, "to protest against those things that you love most is part of being an adolescent."

In that spirit of protest, while agreeing with Erickson and Tom, I object to this term "adolescent" that I have used as well. I have to agree with Josh Cramer's chapel (4/5/92), where he says "Adolescence is such a disgusting word. To me it means not fully developed."

The Chapel as Individual Refuge

Mrs. Hall's Original Intent: Solitude

Most of what we have discussed so far has considered the chapel in the context of groups of people, from carvers to student or faculty chapels to community meetings. But the chapel is also important to people as a place of refuge and solitude, which we have

seen mentioned already by some students and faculty. This was a large part of Mrs. Hall's original intent and motivation for the chapel. The careful reader will doubtless remember that, in her typical storytelling way, Mrs. Hall opened her booklet on the history of the chapel recounting her encounters with solitary students down by the river. She bemoaned the fact that "there was no space for quiet in a crowded school." Mrs. Hall's respect for individual solitude and privacy was an underlying motivation for a place like the chapel — a refuge.

Solace & Refuge Found Then & Now

Mrs. Hall might be heartened to know that from its beginning until now the chapel has served as a place of refuge and solitude, and that people from every path and every time mentioned how important that was for them. Some whom I never formally interviewed would stop me in my wanderings about the campus and mention how important and comforting the chapel was for them in that regard, particularly those who had held memorial services for loved ones in the chapel.

Others talked about how the chapel gave them a respite from the demands and business of the larger school, and they would slip into it quietly and alone. As Admissions Director, Mary Murray Coleman said, "For me, personally, I go there quietly when I need time and I know it's going to be empty and I can spend time with myself without interruption." Spend time with oneself — what a radical notion, that a school, an institution usually so much about being together and about everyone else's ideas should honor and cherish your opportunity to be alone and to "spend time with yourself without interruption." Talk about respect. Talk about finding out who you are. Talk about honoring uniqueness and difference.

At the exhibit I put up for Alumnae Days at Concord, I included a pad of paper where viewers were invited to share their thoughts and stories about the chapel and/or the exhibit. One woman from the class of '72 began her three pages of comments with:

> The chapel at Concord Academy has always been a special healing place of refuge for me, both when I was here as a student and at times in the years since I graduated. When I needed to think quietly, pray, cry, or sing, the chapel was a place I could go and pour out my soul, dawn, dusk, misty evening, or noon-time, I would open the door, hoping to find it empty so I could spend time alone there. It is a wonderful place to sing, or play the piano, with its clear windows which let in the sky and the trees outside and the simple, unadorned walls and wood inside. The open beamwork lets the song soar upward . . .
>
> later] . . . C.A. is inevitably part of "the tour" for people I've developed intimate relationships with, and the chapel is the central building on the tour. One of them gave me a photograph of the chapel which still hangs on the wall in my bedroom and reminds me of how I continue to hold the chapel in my heart as one of the important spiritual centers of my life.

Chapel Trysts. Going past the search for solitude and solace, several people revealed that in that most intimate of safe havens, sometimes the chapel has been a place where couples escape for romance and even for sex. In fact, Mrs. Hall was remembered as sometimes inadvertently coming into the chapel, discovering a couple passionately involved, and quietly tiptoeing out again. Often the couple had no idea of their esteemed visitor. In one case that the girl involved recounted for me, it was not until Graduation that Mrs. Hall let drop a telling comment, revealing her momentary intrusion — a revelation met, needless to say, by total surprise and a tidal wave of embarrassment.

One alumna waxed eloquent on this very subject in her novel, Lust, based on her Concord Academy days and presumed sexual exploits, with the chapel taking center stage as a clandestine rendezvous site. Some faculty recounted these stories with sly smirks. At the same time several of them acknowledged being relieved never to have encountered such trysts in the chapel themselves, not being entirely sure how they would react, but imagining their likely awkwardness and surprise.

Intimate Revelations & My Position as "Researcher"

For others, their highly personal, emotional attachment to the chapel and the gentle, reassuring comfort that the chapel represented for them in times of trouble brought out

incredibly intimate and moving stories. I was taken aback by the intimacy and personal revelations people shared with me. It was neither what I expected, nor, I think, what some of those I spoke with expected either. One person, after receiving and reading the transcript of our talk together, wrote this in a letter to me:

> While it <u>was</u> strange to read what was typed (and at times I felt self-conscious and embarrassed) "listening" as I read brought back our time together and reminded me of the sharing that took place as we talked. What you are doing is so intensely personal and something I was not prepared for. I should add that I'm not sure I knew what to expect but what actually transpired was far more moving and emotional than I had anticipated.
>
> I thank you for your project, for asking me to be a part of it <u>and</u> for your thoughtful and personal approach. Obviously you need to gather information for your dissertation but along the way you should know you have caused me to look at the Chapel in a different way, to think about light and how important it is for me, and to provide the opportunity for me to get to know you better. Thank you for the gift of yourself, the photos, your notes, the transcription.

This was written by Mary Murray Coleman, then Admissions Director at Concord, who had shared such a difficult and beautiful story told earlier about her daughter's chapel at Concord that revealed her step-father's abuse.

<u>Shared Intimacy</u>. Much later in that same conversation, Mary Murray shared another story about her personal association with the chapel as a place of special solace and healing light. The story begins not in Concord, but in Boston, with her husband terribly sick and at the Massachusetts General Hospital. In her words:

> He was very sick at that point and we didn't know what the trouble was. And I had little, itty-bitty kids. And I felt like my tiny little world was just psshew — had crumbled — in front of my eyes. And I walked past the Church of the Advent, just at the foot of Beacon Hill. It was August, a warm August morning. And I can still remember exactly how it felt. It was very hot. And the doors of the church were wide open and somebody was playing the organ. And I happen to love organ music and I just walked in and sat down.
>
> Simply sat down and waited. I don't know what I was waiting for. And the church — I think this is why I'm so aware of light — way high up in the Church of the Advent are stained glass windows. And I was there, let's say, at eleven-fifteen or eleven-thirty in the morning. And I was sitting, really feeling . . . devastated is the best word I can think of. This little ray of sunlight came down and simply shone right . . . I mean, it was the only place in the whole church because of where the sun and the . . . on the pew I was sitting in.

> And I left that place not having a clue what was going to happen to Charlie — not a clue — but something said, "This is O.K. It's going to be, it's going, somehow it's going to be O.K."
>
> I've never forgotten it. And I am very aware of that happening at other times. It's happened in this chapel, not with light, sunlight, but just the way the light plays . . . and, I'm just very light conscious.

Perhaps Mary Murray Coleman's story will help to illustrate how this study was not the distant, academic enterprise I might have expected from the outset. No. People I encountered and chapels I attended were so real, so immediate, so without pretense, and so little keeping a safe distance, that I was thrown into this quite literally as a whole person, caught up not just intellectually, but emotionally and spiritually as well. Touched and touching.

CHAPTER 13

MY OWN IMMERSION, PARTICIPATION, & NEXT STEPS

"What we are doing is not just research. It's about connecting to who we are. . . . When you're doing this kind of research, it's about emotions. Your emotions are part of it and you shouldn't be ashamed of them." — Carmen Mercado, 1993

Caught Off Guard

Not Expecting Intimacy

Like chapels, many people's intimacy and authenticity when interacting with me in this project caught me off guard. I still find myself somewhat confused and disoriented by trying to compress this whole experience and convey it within the confines of a written dissertation. In some ways, I hesitate to write about the most moving of these encounters, as if to speak about them is to violate them or rob them somehow of their inherent power and dignity. Does conveying these encounters in this disconnected, disembodied way rob them of the power and strength that were unmistakably conveyed in the actual telling, by people wonderfully alive, vibrant, and deeply expressive?

Putting together the exhibit about the chapel made the dilemma particularly apparent. I found myself immediately protective of people whom I had interviewed. At the same time as I wanted to share the most powerful stories people had told me, I worried that to put some of these stories up in bold, enlarged text and broad daylight for all to see might somehow breach the trust established between us when those stories had been shared. Of course I checked with everyone to be sure whether they wanted their stories exhibited. But still a nagging doubt assailed me.

Were some of the stories people told too personal, too intimate, to be shared apart from our own heartfelt encounter? And yet it was precisely the most intimate stories that

held the most power and that most compellingly illustrated the deeply moving presence that the chapel signified for many people.

What to Do with Secrets? Then, too, interviews were sometimes occasions for people to reveal long-kept secrets, again not something I had expected. What then? Was I to share those or keep them hidden as they had been sometimes for decades? I would have to take my cue from the participants, finding out directly from them what they wanted me to do. Even to pose the question, however, some time distant from our encounter, seemed to treat our interaction more as an object, to depersonalize it, in some ways to demean it. What to do?

There is, of course, the release form for this dissertation that partly addresses this issue and that reminds participants that they can choose to keep any portion of their interview with me private. But some of our interactions were not taped or transcribed and were more informal and ad hoc. What about them? What I imagine is that the best strategy is to send any segments with material of that kind to the specific participants involved and let them decide whether I should include the segment or not. Perhaps an epilogue will be added to speak to the outcome of this. Until then, what secrets we shared will remain unwritten here.

Personal Involvement

My Personal Background

I do wish, however, to write more about my own personal involvement and immersion in this study. As I said at the outset, I was initially already involved to some extent because I had gone to school at Concord myself and because my son was going there during this study. So I started with some investment in the place. That also meant that I had some extra incentive and commitment, which have served me well.

Participants and Chapels

Beyond my initial connections to the school, the attitude of participants and the power of chapels grabbed me and immediately engaged me as a whole and sentient human being in the world, caught up right away in coming to know these people as individuals and this school as a community. Then, amplifying these and revving the entire study up a notch, came the power of giving a chapel myself.

Giving My Own Chapel

As mentioned before, the idea had been proposed by several people whom I interviewed and Joanne Hoffman, in particular, had suggested that to really understand the chapel and "bring that sparkle" to my dissertation, I should do a chapel myself. I found myself immediately objecting. It would infringe on Noah and his space and prerogative, I countered. He would love it, she replied. My field notes from one conversation note:

> Hmm. Joanne says of course I have to do a chapel — "give a chapel" — like a gift — that I can't possibly do all of this and have it real etc. without doing a chapel myself.
>
> I realize she's right, but find myself trying to weasel out of it. I bring up several objections and she waves each of them off. Now it is definitely as if the ante is upped, the tables turned. I realize that it's a powerful way for that to happen. I am suddenly (well, not so suddenly) invited to be a participant, and in a ritual (I really would call it that) that is highly revealing, that demands a high level of trust and mutuality — of exposure, if you will. She assures me that Noah will love my doing it (when I have objected on his behalf), and that the students will love it and the faculty will love it.

While I may have had some resistance to the idea, my next several pages of field notes illustrate that I was already thinking about what to say in my chapel. After that, what to say in my own chapel became an unconscious backdrop to all the rest of my study. And because of what I had experienced in other people's chapels, because of their intensity and paring away of pretense, the thought of giving a chapel myself made me stop and think; made me dig deeper; made me ask, all right, what is this study <u>really</u> about, deep down, underneath. And what does it mean to <u>me</u>? Not just what am I

learning and what are people telling me, but what does it mean and why and how does it matter, to them and to me?

So, of course, as time went on I wrote and rewrote my chapel. I agonized over what music to play, especially as one day, driving back home from Concord, I was amazed to hear a beautiful musical version of Corinthians 1:13 on the radio. Perfect, I thought. That led to a complicated search that months later revealed that the song, written by singer/song-writer Pierce Pettis, was out of print and relegated to permanent cold storage by the record company with the rights to it. Many people had told me how easy it was to get caught up in trying to find just the right music for their chapel. Josh Cramer (CA '92) described his experience preparing for his chapel:

> I've been here for four years, so freshman year I started thinking about it. . . . and then it had sort of gotten to me . . . and then junior year, I was thinking about music all junior year. The music ended up being the last thing I picked out. Picked it out that morning.

Like Josh, in the end my choices were made just in time for the chapel itself. Then, perhaps not unexpectedly, the morning itself was so hectic and rushed that I ended up omitting the music altogether and just talked in the chapel.

I talked about how the entire project had been a matter of the heart for me, when I had expected it to be about the head. I talked about the people I had met and shared some of their stories and their intentions. I told about how the chapel and what people said about it made me realize that it was about a radically different way of approaching education than we come to expect from schools. The chapel was and is about learning by doing, about "just do it," about risk and learning from mistakes and about having enough confidence in people that you are willing to let them make mistakes. The chapel is about connections backwards and forward through time, from New Hampshire to Concord, from mothers to daughters and sons, and even from a young camper/choirboy in the 1930s in New Hampshire to a Concord senior giving her chapel in 1988.

I talked about how moving, endearing, and fundamental this work has been for me, and how much it has been a continuous encounter, not a remote, heady, bookish study.

I explained that, in the same spirit of the chapel connecting people beyond words and intellect, being up close and touchable, I wanted my study to be accessible and "real," too. I didn't want to do a wordy paper study destined to gather dust on some library shelf. I shared some of people's own stories, in their own words. I urged people to see the exhibit I had composed about this chapel and on display elsewhere in the school and to read the school's booklet on the chapel's history.

But besides all of the content of my chapel, the actual experience of giving it was a wonderful, experiential confirmation of all I had been studying and vicariously participating in so far. To give a chapel made me feel, even as a relative outsider, that I was welcome and was enveloped in a kind of warm cloak of open acceptance, of receptivity, of a willingness, even an eagerness, to be there on the part of all these people in the community. I am sure part of that comes from the intimate scale of the building. My field notes from that day, having given my chapel, read:

> In speaking I find myself wanting to connec with everyone — each one of the people there. Wonderful to look out at people and have them all looking back at me — the whole time.

My notes mention particular people I especially noticed as I spoke, some I barely knew. I note how it felt good having Noah and some of his friends sitting supportively nearby. I go on to write, "And all the hugs later were wonderful". For a sense of these, two shots below show faculty chapel endings (figure 13.1 & 13.2) Further in my notes I find, "I hadn't realized how poignant and touching the signs would be, especially Amani's with his 'thanks for being my second Mom all these years.'" One sign that I still think of was from Tom Wilcox — on a plain white 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper. It takes up a lot of space for this paper, but, you know, I really want to share it with you here (figure 13.3).

Figure 13.1. A Congratulatory Hug for Faculty Chapel, Kevin Jennings, 1992

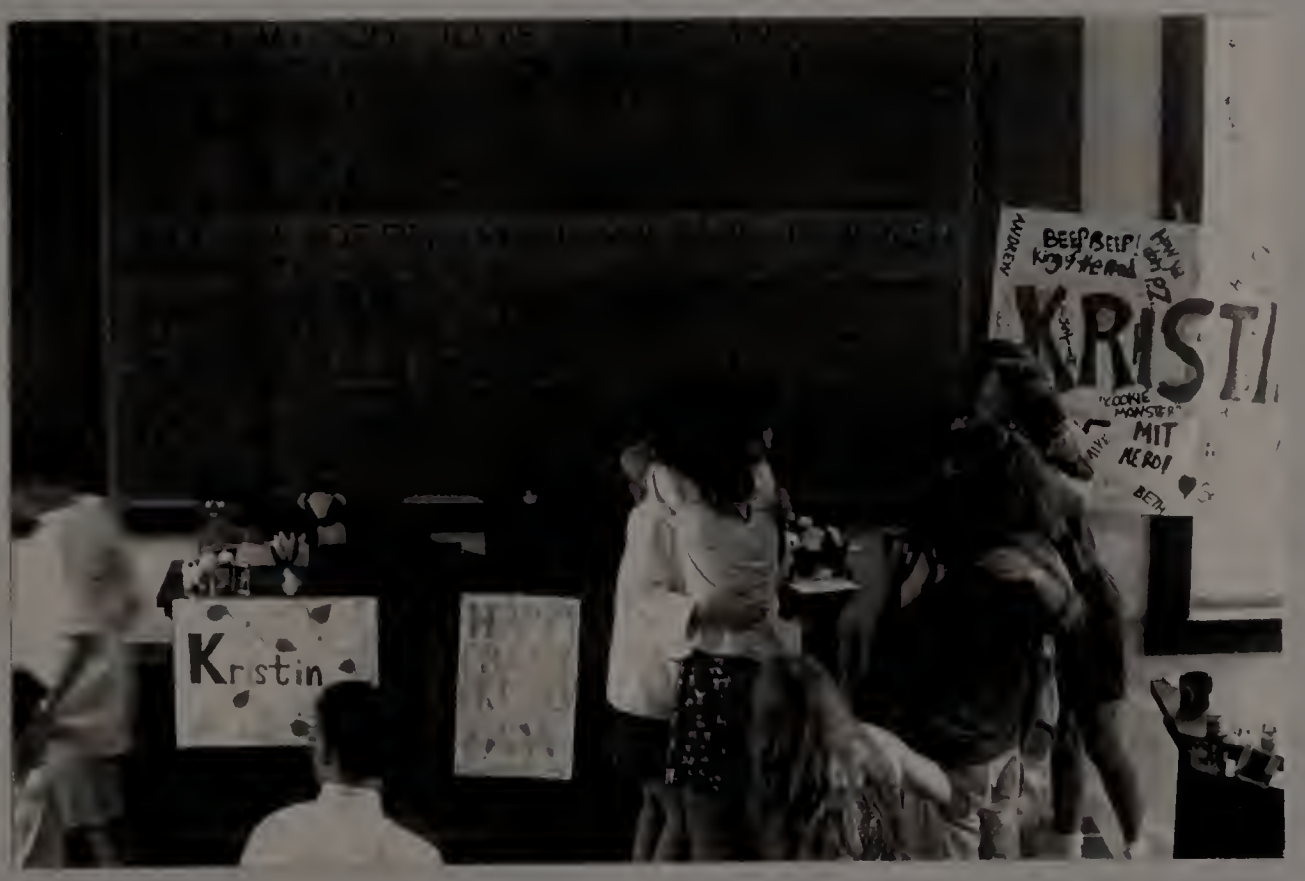

Figure 13.2. Speaker and Listeners All Get Hugs

Figure 13.3. Tom's Chapel Sign for Me in My Chapel

Earlier I had given a talk in the chapel, on this project, during a mid-morning class period usually reserved for things like meetings with advisors. That, too, had been a powerful experience and incorporated much of what transpired in my later chapel talk. Details described in my field notes are apt for both times when I spoke, so I would like to share some of those details here.

> There's something about giving a 'chapel' — well, now, not even a chapel, but a talk about the chapel, that feels very different. I am full of energy and all atingle — as if talking in the chapel is a gift to the person speaking, too — marks a time, honors that what is being said matters, that people would care to listen. I immediately notice who came. . .
>
> It's partly important that you can talk in a normal tone of voice and be heard by everyone, increasing the intimacy and personal quality of the space. . . .
>
> What do I notice? First, that the podium is shaky — increases my nervousness. It's very comforting, the podium, though, and embraces you, it feels. That you can see everyone and they're all looking at you makes you feel the wonderful supportiveness of the place. There is a feeling of possession — that for these few minutes the chapel is "mine" — also a feeling of having shared in a ritual — incredible power in that. . . And their responsiveness is a large part of what makes it feel powerful.
>
> People coming up afterwards was great, especially Tad Lawrence, whom I hardly know, and saying, "You made my day — as so often happens here". . . or something to that effect. No, "You <u>saved</u> my day." Felt key to have Noah and Ben there, beaming such positive energy — and Katy and John O'Connor and Clare and Joanne. Also I <u>loved</u> that Pat Fry came. I know what they mean now about not remembering the day — like you're in a heightened state of awareness, a kind of euphoria.

My notes after the all-school chapel confirm what so many chapel-givers had said to me:

> Afterwards is so anti-climatic, as if you want everyone to stay and talk for hours — with each other, with you — or wander the campus and sit by the river . . . I find that I just don't want to leave. How can I?

As it turned out, I did stay just hanging around the school and was enormously heartened to have students and faculty come up to me and say how much they loved the chapel. One student, "says how much she loved the chapel and how it articulated for her just what she feels about the chapel — puts her emotions into words." One faculty member, Ted Sherman, spoke to me at length and I realized how much I had keyed in on him during the chapel. He said he didn't want to go to class afterwards, but wanted

to just spend the rest of the day with stories or outside. "Mary Murray calls to me from afar and says how everyone's been remarking about it and saying they wished they could hear more stories and how could they just sit and talk with me." Some people stopped me specifically to mention how much the chapel means to them, how intimately and personally connected they feel to it, and how they often go there, quietly, for solace. Even now, three years later, sometimes when I am at Concord someone comes up and specifically talks about that chapel and how much it meant to them — girls especially.

I had closed the chapel with a poem I wrote about it, and several people wanted a copy. Tom said he would like to have it nicely written up and framed to hang somewhere in the school. Of course that immediately made me feel I should rework it. Since I haven't gotten around to that, I haven't yet given them a copy. Since the poem sums up a lot of what I have come to think, feel, and experience about the chapel, though, I'll share the poem with you here.

Chapel Reflections

I've listened with both heart and mind and shared these times of hush.
Suspended, as if neither touched by time nor all the fevered rush.
Expectant, open, each attuned, and judgment left behind.
No idle chatter, silly nudge, no winks or sidelong signs,
No hasty cramming for a test or catching up on sleep,
But rather all the power of a focused lens you keep.
Each one magnifies the other, touching it in space,
Til as a whole you are "attending."
Whispers boom in such a place.

Secrets come here to be told, hearts to be unburdened,
Protected by your care and love as surely as if velvet-curtained.
Some make bold to tackle issues, expunge a thorn they've felt,
Prick at our collective conscience — call us to account
Sometimes the first step they take in whole campaigns they mount

But whether done for self alone or bent on higher cause,
Chapels are for each of us a time to listen, think, and pause.

Chapels challenge each of us to say just who we are
Speaking from the heart itself and not some far off star.
No standing on formality, no careful wait and see.
No need to ask how many others might, indeed, agree.
Propelled by inner need and knowing, ready to be heard,
There's power in the speaking and receiving of each word.
Chords struck hit home to resonate and amplify in us,
Open as our channels are because we're gathered here in trust.

And not alone in time and space, this building hears us too.
Though made of wood and plaster, what happens here's the chapels glue.
This building's clear and calm enough and quiet in itself
To keep in steady beat and drum what happens in its realm.
Absorbed in wood, in subtle touch of every hand it feels,
In quiet and intensity, beneath each layer meaning steals.
Its scale is close enough and real and warm to touch or smell,
That presence rests within these walls so anyone can tell.
Your story is a part of that — what's stored and given back —
As surely as if footprints left their own intrepid track.
Don't think your story's over when the last one's filed out.
The tales that buildings tell are not the kind that shout.
Return in quiet evening or across the dew at dawn
To find a wealth of meaning where heartfelt tales were spawned.
So let me share some tales with you the building knows full well
Perhaps they'll bring us even more under the chapel's magic spell.

We are connected by such threads that spiders cannot see
But that's no reason to presume such threads could never be.
Known in the moonlight, glimpsed in the sea,
They've a power of connection beyond you and me.
And when perchance we sense them, it's something like a gift,
So ever after we've a bridge to cross the widest rift.
We are alone and each unique, yet so much bound together,

As if we'd all survived the fiercest battering of weather.
There's power in the knowledge that we each one have a voice
And power in the sharing that we do of our own choice.
Power in the listening, power in the tale,
Power in the light that enters, just as in the gale.
They say this place is sacred, though it's not religion named,
But sacred in the way that lets each one of us lay claim.
So if you try an echo here, listen for the ages,
Be welcomed as your story adds to others' many pages.

- Daria Bolton Fisk, 2/9/93

I feel really privileged to have been asked to give a chapel for the school, particularly for the whole school during a regular morning chapel time.

The Whole School?

I should add that I feel odd saying "whole" school here. That is how almost all participants I spoke with referred to the school as it gathered in the chapel. But for me that gathering was never the whole school. One of the most intriguing people I encountered during this study was a woman named Pat Fry. She was responsible for cleaning the chapel in her capacity as a building maintainer on campus. So several times when I was in the chapel on my own, outside of scheduled events, she would be there too. I had excellent conversations with her and even though she was never able to keep an appointment for a formal interview with me, I noted our conversations in my field notes.

The very first time I came to what I call a modern-day chapel, I talked with her shortly afterwards. I was taken aback by the bevy of chapel signs festooning the space and I asked her if these were usual. My notes read:

She says, "Yes, it's because it's the person's birthday." She says, "They call it their "chapel," but really it's their birthday. They just say 'Happy Chapel'. That's what I think."

I find out later that many people do choose their birthdays as their chapel days. Sometimes, if their own birthday won't work, they choose their mother's or sister's or brother's birthday.

Pat Fry went on to tell me how she likes the calm and the quiet of the chapel. She takes her time and feels that she can take her time with this building, even though she always feels rushed, in a hurry, with all the others. Sometimes, if she has had a rough night the night before, the chapel is the first building she cleans, like a respite. Other times she intentionally saves it for last, a reward at the end of the day. Watching her clean it, she strikes me as so easily focused and absorbed. I watch her rub the wood of the pews and realize that their deep rich glow is no accident.

Later I learn that she has never actually been to a chapel, although she cleans the building daily and has heard a lot of students practicing their chapels beforehand. I tell her I am scheduled to give a talk in the chapel soon, during a morning class period, and I hope she will come. When I do give that talk she comes and I am delighted. I take a few pictures of her and one of them I blow up and include in the exhibit, accompanied by some of what she said about cleaning the building and how she feels about it.

Later, once the exhibit was up, at one point I noticed one of the workers and the school's Head, Tom Wilcox, chatting in front of that very picture Not only do I love the picture of Pat working on the pews, but I hope that including it lets the workers know that this exhibit is for them, too, that they are welcome to read it and enjoy it, and that what they think is a part of the story, too. The picture of her that appears in the exhibit is shown on the next page (figure 13.4).

Later during this study I happened to be at the school for a big fund-raising auction and dinner that also honors faculty. In the wonderfully festive atmosphere, I couldn't help but notice how the kitchen staff who had prepared the gala dinner were clustered at

the edge of the room, by the entrance to the kitchen, craning their necks and peering out to get a peek at the hoopla. It reminded me of Pat Fry saying that she had never been to a chapel.

Figure 13.4. Pat Fry Taking Her Time With the Chapel

I thought , too, of the workers in my son's private middle school. I remember being surprised at his graduation from that school to realize that a tight little gaggle of workers was sitting throughout the ceremony, listening from an out-of-the-way ledge, back behind everything, hidden from view. They were each hunched over, gazing thoughtfully down at the pavement, avidly listening, since they could see nothing of the gathering, the community they had helped sustain, or the young people they had watched grow from little boys into young men and had picked up after, noiselessly and graciously, for years.

Ironically, over these last several years when I have not been working on this dissertation, much of the time I have been working with front-line workers at the University of Massachusetts and other universities. Working on people speaking up,

communication, assertiveness, and leadership with cooks and groundskeepers, carpenters and policewomen, building maintainers and plumbers raises the problem of invisibility. Academic communities seem especially adept at claiming a commitment to grand notions of equity and tolerance while their daily actions treat workers as invisible.

Splitting Manual and Mental

Labor vs. Thought. This is not disassociated from the way in which schools routinely make a huge distinction between manual and mental work. They usually treat manual work as labor and mental work as thought. Whether intentional or not, they demean one and elevate the other. That the two might comfortably and creatively go hand in hand seems little to be believed, despite our strong American grounding in John Dewey.

Why Not Reconnect Them? Yet it seems to me that Molly Gregory and Mrs. Hall saw the connections quite clearly among the head, the heart, and the hand. They valued and demonstrated the balance between thinking and doing. They understood the satisfaction of seeing concrete results from one's efforts. They treated the material, physical side of reality with respect, even with honor and with love. As Mrs. Hall (1962) noted in her account of the chapel-moving,

> Those of us who were privileged to work on the removal of the church and its restoration in Concord are profoundly grateful for the experience. Strenuous work in the open air, a sense of living with the best in our American past, companion-ship, and the luxury, rare for teachers, of seeing the result of our endeavor, — all added up to an indescribable satisfaction.

Later, talking about getting the students involved in working on the chapel she said,

> I always want to cast about in my mind, what can the kids do to work on this. Saves money. Good for them. They get thrilled. So I called the six class presidents. We still had seventh grade then and eighth grade. So I said, "Ladies, you gotta draw lots here. . . uh, what classes are going to paint the chapel." Well, their eyes lit up. And I said, "I've got six pieces of paper here and two of them are gonna be marked you're in." And the others are blank and meant those are out." So the seventh grade and the seniors got it. And really, I can just remember that sight so well. Classes are called off for them. They were to arrive at school with a bucket that had a bail on it. What's a bail? So I explained what a bail was.

I ask: What is a bail?

Mrs. Hall: The handle of a bucket, that's a bail. And it was to be a big enough bucket. I said, "Don't bring a scrub bucket. I want one that'll hold about a quart," to the seventh grade. "Can you remember that — a quart?" "Yuh," they said, "like a quart of milk!" "Yes, but not a milk bottle. A pail, a pail with a bail." So the day began, with no classes [except] to the other four classes.

I ask: Were they upset?

Mrs. Hall: They were so jealous, yes. They were so jealous. But it was such a cute sight. These great big girls, twelfth grade, and this seventh grade. They were so excited they could hardly stand it. And I came with, I think it was forty gallons of paint and a dipper. And I had a helper. And I think we got the paint into two, I remember two big tubs. And the big girls and the little girls came along and they filled their buckets. And they came each with a paint brush. And they got all the clapboards done . . . So they painted it in one day with no cost except the paint. Did a good job . . . Even if they spilled paint on the lawn, it'll be O.K. . . . So that's story number one.

Valuing physical work, creating community through common effort. Creating excitement in a school and a sense of freedom, playing hooky with the head of the school's blessing, indeed, at her behest. What fun. I was to learn that some of the most playful sides of the school came out in connection with physical projects and the chapel — Mrs. Hall's story about the Blue banner flying from the steeple, Molly Gregory's story about "Is Not Easily Provoked." The words of one student steeple-shingler were passed down over the years. In a burst of frustration she had cried out, "I've shit a spingle!" When I asked Sylvia Mendenhall, one of the most long-standing faculty members involved in this study, if she had any agenda of her own that I could pursue through my work, she urged me not to lose sight of humor — perhaps the subtlest form of resistance, I think.

Mrs. Hall wanted me to convey the idea of "Just do it, " "If it's broken, fix it." Current faculty member John O'Connor wanted me to revive enthusiasm for that whole outlook and ethos that saw the community involved in actual physical projects, in learning by doing, with real world consequences. Molly Gregory's whole life was steeped in that. Both Molly and John might be heartened to read Martha Taft's chapel from 1965, when the Chapel Committee was responsible for cleaning the chapel. I

offer (and even repeat, Heaven forbid) a few more parts of her talk here, so poignantly do they capture the sense of intimacy connected with working on a building.

> Cecily and I enjoyed many things together here at Concord, but there was one thing especially that we had in common; this was our feeling about the chapel. We were on the chapel committee together, which means that we held doors, and cleaned it together once a month. Each time we cleaned, we would first have a great battle over whose turn it was to clean the brass, while the other would have to push the monster vacuum cleaner around, always succeeding in dropping it down the stairs. One of our favorite jobs was changing the candles. One of our unfavorite was dusting the floor.
>
> As painful as much of this cleaning may seem, both of us took great pride in it, and really enjoyed it. After cleaning the chapel, both of us would usually sit for a while, on the altar steps, or wherever we happened to be, sometimes talking, sometimes just thinking about what the chapel meant to us: It meant one Spring spent building the steeple, or a day spent raising the bell. It meant the letter hanging in the back written by Fra Giovanni to a friend. It meant Mrs. Hall's speeches in Vespers or morning chapel. It meant lighting the candles, or passing the plate, sitting upstairs alone, or downstairs with a friend. It meant friendship, with both silence and communication.

In the spirit of these early movers, shapers, and keepers of the chapel, I was heartened to hear several students of the 1990s intrigued by the idea of having a physical relationship to the chapel and to building. Sharon Bergman thought students should have sole responsibility for chapel maintenance, from daily cleaning to painting clapboards and refurbishing benches. Sometimes I saw other students pensively looking over my exhibit and the C.A. booklet about the chapel's history. Occasionally a student would stop to talk and several said they had never really thought about that whole dimension of physical building construction in relation to the school. They were intrigued with the idea that students might be involved and began speculating on how that might be implemented now. It was as if they thought suddenly, Oh wow, this could be so much more <u>our</u> school. I wonder why we haven't thought of this?

One of the first people I interviewed, Ellen Smith, C.A. class of '62, was a principal organizer of the chapel rededication to Mrs. Hall and edited the updated version of the C.A. booklet on the chapel's history. She wished that I could get the school to tackle its new building project of a Math and Arts building with the same community and student involvement as once happened in the chapel. Unfortunately that

was an undertaking too ambitious for my time and resources and out of synch with the project's schedule.

The Arts Now as Just Do It. When I asked faculty at C.A. now whether the "just do it" spirit of direct engagement and learning by doing was still present in the school, some said unfortunately no, except when it came to the performing arts. In music, theater, and dance some still saw that sense of community and of direct action. Maybe they felt that sense of play in the performing arts, too. Figure 4.4 shown earlier in this work and reproducing the back page of a C.A. Catalog suggests to me that the performers may have that sense of just do it, try it and see what happens. Do they go further here and offer playful, ironic critique of the chapel itself? Or am I imagining things? I would be curious to know your interpretation.

Others whom I interviewed saw that spirit of risk-taking, confidence in learning by doing, and trust that it will turn out O.K. waning now at C.A., and they think of it happening there now essentially only in the giving of chapels. Peter Wallis, now on C.A.'s Board and the student instigator of painting the entire outside of the chapel in 1976 said, "It's too bad we couldn't do something like that now." People think of how we are mired in the age of litigation and of how everyone imaginable would raise every conceivable objection. I can hear Mrs. Hall saying "Best to go ahead without saying anything about it."

The Project Hits Home

If It's Broken, Fix It.

My Transcriber. The reader may be amused to know that the lessons of the chapel story were not entirely lost on me in my own life. One example may suffice. In the midst of this work there was one point when I was busily writing about Mrs. Hall and learning by doing. If you're bicycle's broken, fix it. At the very same time my

transcriber was seriously malfunctioning. Now a transcriber does not seem like a simple machine. This one can change tape speed and voice tone and timbre. It has variable options for tape back-up and overlap, foot pedal or hand controls, and earphones or regular speaker. Costing something like $200, it was vital to my work with the interviews for this dissertation.

So when it broke I didn't know what to do. Part of me figured send it back to the manufacturer. Another part of me did not want to part with it that long. What to do? I wavered. I searched for local repair options without success. I lingered, busying myself with tasks not requiring transcription. I let the machine lie fallow to recuperate, hoping that in time it would be fine. I imagined that any day now someone would probably wander into my life who had just such a transcriber themselves, had once suffered just such a malfunction, and who knew just what to do about it, in a jiffy.

Finally one day, typing along about "just do it," I figured, Oh, why not. So I unscrewed the thing and took a look at it. To my surprise what looked so complex on the outside was disarmingly simple on the inside. It was perfectly obvious that a simple spring was simply dislodged. So I slipped the spring back into position, rescrewed the back on, and was back in business. One, two, three.

Just Do It

Launching an Exhibit. I think the same spirit overtook me when I decided to make an exhibit for this project. I had not heard of other people doing anything like that in their dissertations. I wanted to find ways of engaging people at Concord more directly in my project than is usual for academics, but I was not sure what that meant or how I might go about it. I knew that photography seemed like a natural medium for me, especially when it came to buildings. How could I possibly do a project about a building without pictures of that building? I also knew that photographs have a wonderfully evocative potential completely unmatched by words.

I also had, in the back of my mind, some lingering fascination with a book I had seen called Rich and Poor by Jim Goldberg (1985) — a powerful book of photographs of people overtly rich or visibly poor. Each photo was accompanied by brief text, in people's own handwriting, commenting on their own photographs and lives. As I thought about the chapel and began interviewing people and taking photographs, the idea of a booklet combining the two and eventually of an enlarged and selected exhibit began to take shape. I broached the idea with several people in interviews and they all seemed to like it.

Time went on. I was not sure how to proceed. Then there was a moment when I just said, why not. I had an urge to combine words and photographs. I could picture an exhibit in my mind. I realize now, in hindsight, that I was inspired also by slides a friend, Tony Ward, had once shown at an Environmental Design Research Association Conference. He showed an exhibit he and his architecture students at Berkeley had mounted, with great blow-ups of the students, accompanied by enlarged text on what the students thought both about the project itself and about their sense of themselves in relation to the project.

So, the seeds of an exhibit were sown and now I just had a desire to do it, even though I had never really done anything like it before, or certainly nothing at such a public or large scale. I had put photographic stories and booklets together for people before but mostly on a personal scale that one person could hold and look at individually. An exhibit of large photographs and text was another matter altogether.

But once I decided to just go ahead and do it, everything else fell naturally into place. The doing took over. Of course there were things to be discovered and mistakes to be made along the way, but immersing myself in the actual doing of the work made solving those problems as they cropped up a natural part of the process. Just do it.

Trip to New Hampshire & the Pumpkin. Another example of bringing the message home involved New Hampshire. Search for the chapel's original site was not

something I carefully planned, although I had planned to carefully plan it. As it was, because of the day, starting with Kevin Jennings's chapel, I just seized the moment and went. On a similar impulse I stopped to chat with an old C.A. classmate and to my delight she came along. Suddenly there was a fun, playing hooky feel to the whole thing and the day unfolded magically, from start to finish. I've already told you how it went and you already know the pumpkin story.

Bringing Mrs. Hall Back to the Chapel. When Concord asked if I would come for Alumnae Days and talk in the chapel about this project, they suggested that Mrs. Hall might come and talk, too. I was hesitant, considering her health and age, knowing that she was "the same, like always, only older." But then I thought, why not, just do it, at least see what she thinks. She had a whole variety of reservations, too. "I don't even recognize the place anymore, nothing's the way it used to be."

I assure her that the kids and the spirit persist. She sounds more interested. "What would I say? How'll I get there? I'm fine on my own with my cane, but people trying to help me upset my balance and send me flying."

In the end she did come and told wonderful, engaging stories, just like always, and everybody loved her. For me it was great to have her there and to hear her stories again, in the chapel, in just the way I think of her and came to love and admire her. I called her the next day to ask how it was for her. She said, "You've given me a lot to think about — especially about power." Then she added, "I felt like I was coming home. I feel that when I go to Concord, everyone's there waiting for me and loving me." Yeah. Me too. Here is a shot of Mrs. Hall in recent times, much more diminished than she really is.

Figure 13.5. Mrs. Hall, Still Game

What Next?

My Part

As for me, I like doing more than talking about it. This whole dissertation makes me want to hole up with Molly Gregory for a while and join in whatever she is up to. Seriously. I like working with my hands and might have abandoned this writing project long ago if it weren't for having the pictures. I think fondly of Molly Gregory saying to me after reading the transcript of our interview ". . . a lot of verbal diarrhea. "I think you ought to condense that all into a sentence or two, sum it all up."

The Exhibit. I have the same sentiment now and I realize that is what the exhibit, my chapel poem, and giving a chapel did for me. As I have been working on this paper, I pass the exhibit stacked up in my hallway, on my way to the big file cabinet that holds the reams of transcripts, journal articles, C.A. magazines, flyers, and documents, Graduate School guidelines, my own comprehensive paper and dissertation

proposal, letters from alumnae, from colleagues, from the Graduate School threatening to evict me from the school for dragging this process out so long. Every time I pass the exhibit stacked up there I think, now there's a way to do something — highly selective, visually engaging, evocative, accessible, fun, immediate, doable. Something you might even recommend that your friends or colleagues try. Poems have that appeal too — direct, experiential, immediate, holistic, evocative. As Robert Graves notes, prose is one-dimensional, whereas poetry has "emotional depth" and operates on many dimensions simultaneously (1961, p. 102).

So what are my plans and suggestions from here? I think I'll see if the folks in New Hampshire want me to bring the exhibit up there and have a few chats, maybe give a presentation or two. They had invited me when I first began this project, but I didn't have the time and had not yet put the exhibit together. Tom said that the school would love a copy, too. I said O.K. They even offered to pay for it, but I refused. It seemed to me the least I could do as a gift for all Concord has done for me. So I would like to do that. But I admit to being a bit too poor right now to follow through — maybe later. Meantime I haul the exhibit over to C.A. from time to time, for Alumnae Days and such. It's nice to have something like that to drag around, because after all, who's going to have the time or patience to read this thing? I think the next thing I'll do, too, when I finally finish all these steps, is have a big party somewhere where we can have the exhibit up, so everyone can see it without my having to explain and without having to read this paper. It would be fun to show some of the videos of chapels there too.

C.A. Alumnae/i Days: Honoring Everyone's Story. C.A. asked the other day if I would come for Alumnae Days again next year, just in case they want me to. I said O.K., but in thinking about it I realize that I'd only like to do it if I can integrate other people more into it. Maybe I could get Mary Monks, C.A. '54, who so graciously wrote to me, whose family was so pivotal to securing early funds for the

chapel, and whose father is memorialized in the cross up in the chapel balcony — maybe I could get her to come and join me.

Maybe John Keller who sang in the choir as a young camper in New Hampshire when the chapel was still a church and who listened to his own daughter give her senior chapel in 1984 — maybe he would come. Maybe George Foss or Virginia and Adrian Preston would come and share their stories of the chapel's days in New Hampshire — days in the chapel's past when anyone who chose to speak from the pulpit was welcome, when "ministers" were simply self-appointed spokespeople, sharing their own voices in their own ways, for any who cared to listen. No wonder the chapel seems so ready to hear, so willing to give whatever speaker center stage.

Maybe some of the carvers or steeple-builders would share the pulpit with me. Maybe the two alumnae who in their own church play their original composition for Corinthians 1:13 — maybe they would come and play it for us. Maybe all the C.A. grounds people and maintenance workers, cooks, and clerks could come, too. Maybe Pat Fry would talk about how she has come to know the chapel cleaning it day in and out. Maybe the painters and roofers and carving cleaners would speak. Maybe Molly Gregory would come and in just a sentence or two wrap the whole thing in a ball and toss it to us.

Chapel Anniversaries. I think the chapel wants me to do something like that, some time or other. Now that I think of it, Ellen Harde (C.A. '62) orchestrated just such a celebration for the 1984 rededication and chapel renaming. Carvers and builders came back and talked about their experience of the chapel. Molly Gregory was there and, of course, Mrs. Hall — like coming home. Early in this project I discovered that the chapel was 150 years old in 1972, right in the midst of my work. It seemed like a great opportunity to celebrate. Several others thought so, too. It seems funny to me that some said, "But that has nothing to do with us. Our focus is the chapel's time since it came to Concord Academy." Hmmm. Not the same people who said they sit in the

chapel now and "often think about who sat on those benches in New Hampshire," or wonder "who rescued what from whom?"

Maybe there will be other moments, marking other times. As a church, the building opened on August 24th, 1842. The church's farewell service took place on August 14, 1855, so I guess 1995 would be an O.K. year to celebrate, or 2005. How old will I be then? Probably, like Molly Gregory, an antique.

Connecting People & Places to Each Other. Looking back through my field notes, I find this, written on October 6, 1991 on my return from the trip to Snakerty Brook.

> Key when Virginia [Preston] mentioned how it was never locked. It makes me think of the spirit of the place, of sharing, of Snackerty or the pumpkin growers, how they sell them all for $1, no matter what the size. Bringing the pumpkins back and putting the best one on the chapel steps seems magical and mystical somehow. . . I don't really think so until the moment when I put it there, when a sudden special tingle comes over me — almost like a ringing — a call — a kind of sudden connection made.
>
> Now I think of all kinds of things that happen in a church — weddings, baptisms, deaths, communion — and I begin to realize that of course tremendous energy and spiritual force would be caught up in a church and would abide there. So the simple act of bringing a pumpkin from one place to another takes on much more import than one would ever otherwise think.
>
> Some ideas are beginning to crystallize for me. I imagine giving a chapel — in the chapel — and having there my committee and people from Snackerty and Strafford and Mrs. Hall and having the whole photographic exhibit — and introducing them to one another — connecting and reconnecting them and sharing some of their most wonderful stories with each other. I do think I should do some kind of a book — or booklet. — as if an odyssey.

Writing or Not

If I were to carry forward with any of this in writing — not that I mean to, mind you — but if I were to, here are some of the things I would do. I think I would edit this paper into some kind of a readable (and shorter!) book. I would spend time finding some of the things that are omitted here.

Visiting More People. For example, a glaring omission is having never talked with Bill or Beryl Eddy, wonderfully instrumental in the chapel's move to C.A. It

would also be great to visit them, as they live in a home designed by Molly Gregory, in the Northeast Kingdom in Vermont. Unfortunately, I was unable to arrange to meet or talk with them earlier. What else? I would talk with the various heads of C.A. over the years and get their views and stories. I would spend more time poking around in New Hampshire. I would also dig around to get more of a sense of Miss Young's role. Pictures of her working on the chapel are fuzzy and few. Only a couple of people from those early days even mention her. Talk about invisible. Yet Mrs. Hall is quick to note that the chapel would never have come to Concord except for Miss Young.

I would also interview in depth some people whom I encountered in this study, but was able to speak with only briefly, like the student who "broke the sound barrier" or the Midnight Chapel Committee. In particular, I would reinteview Ellen Smith Harde, C.A. '62, who has done so much to honor and sustain the memory of the chapel and its history. Although she was one of the very first people I met with, unfortunately my tape of that meeting is only partially audible, due to technical difficulties.

Exploring Parallel Projects. As for going beyond the topic of the chapel itself, I would tie this whole chapel effort and approach into other similar approaches and projects that seem to me equally motivated and empowering. Here are a few examples. In the public high school in Hull, Massachusetts the most troubled teenagers, on the brink of dropping out of school, are gathered into a boat-building class. They build boats from scratch and then sail them. It turns out that that experience is pivotal for many and turns them entirely around in terms of school, themselves, and their futures.

I would look into a program I heard about in, I think Virginia or West Virginia, where a school teacher has young ten and twelve year old girls learning to fly airplanes and actually flying them. She started out doing this as a way of encouraging girls about science.

I would find out more about the middle school history project where students learn about slavery and the Civil War by actually retracing the underground railroad routes and stopping to talk with people along the way. I would get in touch with Robbie Lepzer, a local filmmaker right here in the Pioneer Valley in Western Massachusetts, who has been working with middle school students on making oral history videos, interviewing old-timers about their lives and this area.

I would find out more about some projects I know a little about, integrating photography and voice, in the sense of people finding and using their own voices. One case in Washington, D.C., involves young, homeless kids taking photographs about their own lives. The man behind the project was a photojournalist for years, and then decided to give that all up to work with kids telling their own stories through photography. They have produced a great book called Shooting Back (1991). By now maybe they have done more. A similar project involves homeless women doing their own photography through a homeless shelter literacy project in Boston. In this case the shelter produced an exhibit. Maybe that, too, has carried on.

I would explore a fantastic project I just learned about called Kids of Survival in the South Bronx, where at-risk kids do collaborative art in response to books that they read (Paley, 1994). They tear out the actual pages of the books and glue them together to make a huge backdrop that becomes their collective canvas — sometimes 11 feet long by 3 feet wide. Their work has gained wide acclaim and been recognized as both an alternative art medium and a powerful educational approach. It seems wonderfully compatible with what the chapel has been about.

I would find out more about the project I heard about just this August ('95). Apparently a chapel near Great Barrington, Massachusetts (Mrs. Hall's home now) was recently dedicated at the Eagleton School. The chapel was erected by the school, in memory of three people at the school who were killed in a freak tornado-like storm last

summer. To remember and honor those who died, the school took trees felled by the storm and refashioned them into a chapel. I wonder if Mrs. Hall was involved.

I would also visit Buxton, a private secondary school in the Berkshires of western Mass. where students are reputed to have a similar ritual to C.A.'s chapels, in this case outside in a "chapel" formed by trees, and happening only once a year, rather than throughout the year. Still, I would be interested to see what happens there.

I would integrate into my study projects where kids have an overt political impact, like some of the environmental activism projects I've heard of kids doing — places where they stop a development dead in its tracks — that kind of thing.

What Then? Those are the kinds of things I would like to explore. Then maybe it would be fun to write a book. But if I were to write a book, I would definitely reconsider this word "empowerment." It smacks too much of having been a victim. I'm not sure what a better word is, but I would like to find one. Maybe the word "power" is an improvement. How about a book called Kid Power?

Anyway, those are some of the things I'm not planning to do. How about you? As for me, I think I'll stick to poems — shorter, sweeter, and closer to the bone.

C.A. & Other People's Generosity

Throughout this project people at Concord Academy have been enormously generous with their time, spirit, and enthusiasm. Without them I should surely have lost heart at least once or twice along the way. Their enthusiasm and involvement helped make me realize that this project was not just my isolated effort, either, but one in which others played all sorts of vital roles. I will enumerate just a few examples.

Many, many people who graciously met and talked with me about the project, carving out time that I am sure they could barely spare, but managed to squeeze in. Despite what must have been hectic for them, they never made me feel intrusive or

burdensome. Some met repeatedly with me and never complained if I dropped in unexpectedly to chat. Others willingly participated in tasks like looking through hundreds of pictures and helping to choose which ones should be enlarged for the exhibit. Students generously helped make flyers and posted them around school, announcing an exhibit or talk. Others helped hang the exhibits or videotape chapel talks. One student, Ralene Burkette, even contributed her own photographs of the chapel in one of the exhibits.

The Alumnae Office was wonderful about announcing and scheduling chapel talks and the exhibit for me. The Publications Director, Maria Lindberg, with no suggestion from me, printed a brief description of my project in the Alumnae Magazine which was distributed to all alumnae. This is reproduced in the Appendix and its publication resulted in several alumnae and others contacting me about the project. The C.A. archivist was also exceptionally helpful and most generous with loaning me early chapel photographs. Others in the Development and Alumnae Office from Carol Shoudt to Liz Kahn have been ongoing enthusiasts and have always accommodated my various requests with good humor and moral support.

Others, too, were wonderful about sharing their insights and even their own work with me. John O'Connor dug out a slide show he had made some years earlier and showed me the entire thing, which included some extraordinary shots of the chapel and some exceptional comments about it. Katy Rea Schmitt lent me her entire physics lab to use in preparing the first exhibit — a wonderful and serendipitous occurrence as it allowed all sorts of people to drop by and interact about the chapel with whom I might otherwise never had an opportunity to speak. This made me realize that for a project like this, involving a considerable period, a good deal of immersion, and a physical, engaging product, like the exhibit, which requires significant preparation, it would be great to be able to have a space on site to work in. To have had a little niche of an office somewhere or a corner of a studio for a project like this would have been a lot of fun

and would have provided a terrific ongoing opportunity for unplanned interactions and broader involvement in the project. I would definitely suggest this for anyone thinking of undertaking a similar effort in the future.

Granted that most settings are probably short of space, nevertheless, if one could set up shop on site somewhere, I think it could make a big difference in terms of people in the setting feeling greater involvement and a greater sense of ownership in the project. In my case it would also have meant that there was more chance for the setting to assume a more dominant role, in that people could drop in to talk at their choice and wouldn't have to wait for me to contact them. As it was, several people contacted me and said that they would like to be interviewed for the project, or sometimes students, in particular, brought others along with them for interviews. But most of the time I selected participants, rather than their selecting me. Being on site would put them more in the driver's seat.

Finally, I would be entirely remiss not to mention the incredible support of English teacher Clare Nunes, a faculty member of the Chapel Committee with whom I spoke regularly about upcoming chapels. When would it be convenient to visit? Has the schedule changed again? Each time I called she would launch into an entire dissertation student therapy session. First she would wax eloquent on how wonderfully meaningful my effort was and how the whole school was behind me. Then she would tell me not to be disheartened that things take longer than you expect. She probed for details on my progress or particular snags and would offer just the right words, at just the right moments, in just the right tone, that I would be reminded all over again why I was doing all this. She gave me heart all over again, time and again. Sometimes she would say, "You know, I've been thinking about this special aspect of the chapel and I wonder if you've been thinking about it, too." Then she would share a special insight or describe an issue brewing under the surface, barely discernible, but emblematic. She

was always going one step farther — thought provoking, searching, happy to share. Having neglected to do so earlier, I share her picture with you here (figure 13.6).

Figure 13.6 Clare Nunes, English Teacher and Dissertation Therapist

What I Would Have Done Differently

Time

First, if I could have, I would have taken a lot less time on this entire project. I first interviewed Tom Wilcox to see about pursuing the project in April, 1991. It is now August of 1995. What could have speeded things up? Not having to work

simultaneously with doing this project and/or having plenty of money to pay other people to do certain things would have helped. A huge time investment was in transcribing tapes and the lag time that doing my own transcriptions created meant considerable lag for participants as well. I would have loved to have had the luxury of rapid transcriptions, readily returned to all involved for their responses.

Later ease or assistance with reformatting text which got jumbled in moving from one computer program to another would have been helpful. Everything would also have been facilitated by having a fancier computer to start with. Anyone who knows Macintosh computers will doubtless chuckle when I tell them that the bulk of this work was done on a Mac 128 and Mac 512, two of the smallest and earliest Macs ever. The consequence of that was that I could type a maximum of 10 or 12 pages at a time, and then would have to save that and start over.

Finally to save time I would have not had a severe back injury and eventual operation right in the middle of this effort, losing a full year to year and a half.

Unfortunately, this wreaked all sorts of havoc with my dissertation committee make-up, especially at a time when the university was in the throes of reorganization and severe budget cuts. What is that word they sanitize things with, "down-sizing?" At any rate, I had no business having managed, nevertheless, to be picked up, stray orphan that I was, by Patt Dodds, my dissertation chairperson. I had never taken a course with her, had rarely spoken to her, but had heard marvelous things about her and delighted in the work of some of her students. She seemed to me to be one person in the School of Education with an honest to goodness sense of humor. I will be forever grateful to her for taking me on and as a consequence both easing my anxiety and improving my work. Pat has been clear, prompt (can you believe it?), enthusiastic, and a complete pleasure to work with and to get to know even a little bit. I hope she still feels happy to have undertaken all this by the time she gets to this nearly last of too many pages.

I am also most fortunate to have had the good fortune to have had Gretchen Rossman and Peter Park serve on this committee. Both have been patient, insightful, and responsive, and each offered me excellent advice and moral support long before they served in any official capacity on this committee. It was nearly five years ago when I first approached Gretchen about my idea for this dissertation, saying that I was thinking of doing this as a weaving of stories. Rather than dissuade me, she said, "I know someone who did their dissertation as a novel!" She then pointed me to material about narrative as a way of knowing. Encouragement like that goes a long, long way. Both Gretchen and Peter have kept a steady vigil over my progress, extended though my effort has been, far longer than either of them ever expected. Teachers make a leap of faith in taking students on for such unpredictable endeavors and I thank them for their vote of confidence and their exceptional staying power.

Another drawback to the long time spent on this project is that participants may have lost sight of this project altogether. Fortunately C.A. has been enamored of my chapel talks and has invited me back to the school each year for Alumnae Days, which has allowed me to keep in touch and to remind them that this project is still ongoing. I occasionally think, however, that many of those at C.A. when I started may wonder what ever became of me.

On the other hand, there are a few advantages to having taken this long. One is that I am still going back to Concord and actually continue to hear new and interesting things from people. The most recent reunion, for example, yielded Martha Taft's (C.A. '65) complete script from her own senior chapel, replete with placement, numbers and names of hymns, prayers, etc. (see Appendix). It was not until this most recent reunion, either, that the idea of the woodcarving as subversive surfaced. Also if I had not taken this long, I might never have heard from those who have reached me by letter and shared such marvelous stories of their own involvement with the chapel. I suppose a third advantage of taking this long is knowing that I now know that I can undertake

something that may take a pretty long time. So, I guess if I were to undertake a book or something, I wouldn't be that cowed by it and I might have a more realistic idea of how much time to set aside for it.

Of course another disadvantage to having taken this long is now I am quite a bit older — not what I anticipated when I started this entire doctoral program. I knew I'd be a little bit older by the time I finished this program, but not this much older. It makes me worry that there is less time left to accomplish things than I wish. On the other hand, from the ancient Greek oracle at Delphi to the more modern Spalding Gray, I keep hearing echoes that say, "You have plenty of time," and "Take your time." At least no one can accuse me of having rushed through this project.

Another frustration of the time involved is that by this time all sorts of new material has been written that would be marvelous to be able to read and to carefully consider in relation to this topic. There are some recent publications that I can already tell at a glance are going to be ones I wish I had had a chance to read before writing this. Power and Method: Political Activism and Educational Research (Gitlin, 1994) is one. I know there are lots of others, too, but both you and I have places to go and things to do.

Where We Have Been & Might Be Going

Some people think you need a roadmap before setting off. Others like to look back at where they've been before they launch anything anew. In deference to them, let me close with a few words on where we have been and where we have journeyed in this paper and what it points to.

Clearly issues of what constitutes legitimate knowledge are crucial. Hopefully I have shown you how Concord Academy and the chapel challenge notions of hegemony, hierarchy, and control when it comes to who claims to know, who speaks, and who listens. At Concord Academy it is no longer just the teacher who teaches and the

student who learns. Everybody is both teacher and learner, to some extent. Furthermore, as one faculty member said, "Everybody takes a risk."

I think a next step in this work could be entitled "Beyond Dichotomies." The chapel and Concord Academy demonstrate that it is possible for a vibrant, challenging, and "real" school to embrace both childhood and adulthood, both individuality and community, both joy and sadness, and both conflict and agreement. It is possible to recognize and celebrate how we are the same, at the same time as acknowledging and respecting our differences. Traits we might stereotypically associate with men can equally be appropriate for women. Similarly women can incorporate and embrace qualities more usually associated with men. Both women and men emerge more full and whole.

When we think of power, we realize that it can be fostered by being alone as well as coming together, by celebrating individuality in community, whether it be through seeking solitude in a community building or seeking individuality in the context of the whole community. Power with combines with power to and with power from within, to create a whole, rich, irreducable whole. Shadows do not exist without sunlight, indeed, they are two sides of the same thing. The play of sunlight and shadow together are more powerful than either one. I offer one final picture of the chapel as a demonstration of that (figure 13.7).

But enough said. Now we must move on to fewer words and more actions. I, for one, am curious if any of this story impells you toward action. I hope that it does and I hope that hope you let me know about your own adventures and how they intersect with any of the things we have explored together here. As you launch into wherever it is you are going, I can only say, "Bon Voyage, Charlie! Have a wonderful time!"

Figure 13.7. Shadow & Light — Beyond Dichotomies

APPENDIX A

CHAPEL TIMELINE

1791 - Freewill Baptists organize as a 70 member church (but without a building).

1842, August 24 - The "chapel" building is 1st open & put into use.

____, April 8, - named the Strafford & Barnstead Union Church.

1929 - Last regular services held in the building.

1940 - Savings account established by church members for church preservation.

1954 - At C.A. the Fire Inspector condemns assembly & loose chairs, threatens closure.

1954, Spring - Mrs. & Mr. Hall & Miss Young visit the chapel in N.H., intent on pews. The building and contents are owned by Holden Greene, specialist in preserving and relocating historic buildings.

1954, Spring - Miss Young buys gambrel house in Middleton, from Mr. Greene.

1954, Spring & Summer - Miss Young moves the entire house to Carlisle and restores it, to become her own home. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hall help.

1954, Nov. 5 - Mrs. Hall buys the chapel building, pews and all for C.A.

1954, Nov.-'56, Spring - Periodic visits to bring down pews. Local N.H. man, Bob Tate, hired to secure the building against weather etc.

1955, August 15 - Special last farewell service held in the church in N.H.

1956, April - Bill Eddy (C.A. English teacher), Mrs. Hall, and Miss Young over coffee hatch the idea of taking the building down over the summer.

1956, June 27 - Eddy's set up camp in Barnstead and start work on the building, followed in a few days by Conrad White and soon after by Belinda Burley. Miss Young can't stay because of the Andrea Dorea disaster. In three weeks the team dismantles the building.

1956, July 18 - The building is trucked to C.A.

1956, end of August - Essential structure reassembled in Concord.

1956, Fall - C.A. girls paint clapboards

1956, December - 1st school use of the chapel for Christmas Vespers.

1957, May - 1st regular service at C.A.

1956-'57, Winter - C.A. girls start Corinthians 13 carving.

1957, June 6 - Final Corinthians carving put up for Baccalaureate.

1957-'58, Winter - Corinthians borders and side angels are carved. Girls also design and build music stands, rail and sanctuary screen for the gallery.

1959, Fall - Girls begin work on the altar memorial to Beverly Belin.

1960-61, Winter - Students build the steeple.

1961, October 12 - The steeple is raised.

1962, Summer - A bell is located & purchased.

1962, Columbus Day - The bell is hung.

1962, January- Mrs. Hall writes & C.A. publishes a booklet on the chapel's history.

1966 - 1st prerecorded music is played in the chapel. Yearbook shows a chapel bell choir. This may have been the first year of no full singing choir.

1966-70 - Yearbooks show woodcarving still underway.

1967 - The last of the organ music is played in the chapel.

1968 - "Breaking the Sound Barrier" - "Come On Baby Light My Fire" is played in a student's chapel, ushering in the more regular use of recorded music.

1969-1970 - When C.A. gave up choir robes? (Robes not seen after '69 yearbook)

1971 - Boys are admitted to C.A. as the school becomes coed.

1976, Spring - Peter Wallis organizes a paint-the-chapel project involving about 30-50 students and several faculty.

1976, Spring - Alex Harvey uses her chapel to call a day off from school and the day is filled with workshops of all sorts. For a few years after Alex Harvey Day becomes a traditional a day off and is devoted to workshops focusing on a range of issues at C.A.

1984, Fall- Molly Gregory is invited back to work with students & they carve panels for the dedication of the chapel to Mrs. Hall.

1984, May 19 - The Chapel is dedicated to Mrs. Hall & Ellen Smith Harde '62, President C.A. Alumnae/i Association, edits a second edition of the booklet, includes the dedication of the chapel to Mrs.

1991, Spring - I begin this study

1993, May - Mrs. Hall returns for Alumnae/i Day and she and I talk about the chapel, in the chapel, to the alumnae.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE LETTERS & ALUMNAE MAGAZINE COVERAGE

The Chapel Turns 150; Alumna Chronicles Its History

Unbeknownst to most of the Concord Academy community, August 24, 1992 marked the Chapel's 150th birthday. Though it has served as the metaphoric heart of CA for the past thirty-five years, the Chapel was originally constructed in 1842 as the Snackerty Brook Meeting House in Barnstead, New Hampshire. The building, and particularly the memories it evokes, are the subject of a doctoral thesis in participatory architecture by Daria Bolton Fisk '63, whose photograph of the chapel podium is pictured here. Daria has spent over a year photographing the Chapel and interviewing numerous people connected with its history, including current students, past and present faculty, alumnae/i, and former Headmistress Elizabeth B. Hall, for whom the chapel was named in 1984. Her collection of pictures, along with accompanying quotations from these interviews, was shown on campus during Alumnae/i Weekend in May. Daria welcomes others' stories and impressions of the Chapel; if you would like to contribute yours, please call her at (413) 773-8948, or send your written thoughts to 11 Park Street, Greenfield, MA 01301. ◆

JOHN W. KELLER
24 CLIFF ST.
NAHANT, MASS.
01908

December 8, 1992

Dear Ms. Fisk,

The Newsletter from Concord Academy brought back memories of many years ago, sixty to be exact, when as a small boy I attended a camp in Barnstead, New Hampshire. I attended Camp Sherwood Forest on the shores of a small lake, Half Moon or Crescent - I can't remember which , from 1929 to 1933. The minister of the church in Barnstead was a Mr. Wenz, and why I should remember his name after 60 years is a mystery. (I have many such spaces in my head that could have been occupied by much more useful information.)

To swell his congregation, Mr. Wenz invited us to sing in his choir on occasions, but it was a very small congregation nevertheless. I am sure that we simply sang the harmony of the hymns and did not divide it up into parts as I can not remember any rehearsals. I can remember a shed with at least 8 or 10 stalls beside the church to shelter the horses and/or carriages from the rain or snow.

Would that my older brother were still alive; his memory might be much better. But when my youngest daughter, Jennifer, class of '87, led the weekly meeting in this chapel, I felt that somehow, perhaps the wooden pews remembered me as I remembered them! But the church was only 87 years old when I was there, and it may not remember.

Thank you for your work , collecting the past of this warm and graceful building.

Very sincerely,

John W. Keller M.D.

Mary Macauley Monks · CA 1954

Mrs. John N. Lukens, Jr.
4520 Beacon Drive
Nashville, TN 37215-4004

Jan. 4, 1992

Dear Ms. Fisk,

The Concord Academy chapel holds a special place in my heart. The little area in the balcony bears a plaque with my father's name - John Peabody Monks - a trustee of the school (I don't remember how many years). I remember a lovely (probably candlelit) service of dedication of that area on an evening in Dec. '57.

It was entirely appropriate that the 1st wedding in the chapel was that of Mrs. Hall's eldest daughter, Peggy. But the 2nd, June 7th, 1958 was mine. My sisters were married there as well. Olga in 1960, Ann in 1964

(Sadly, one is the only one in place.) My mother, after 11 years of widowhood, was married there as well in June 1967.

On a very trite note, I was the very last graduate of Concord Academy to have attended the school for 12 years. Mrs. Hall referred to me at graduation as the "Lifer."

I'm not sure that this is what was called for on pg. 5 of the ~~Fall~~ Newsletter - but it's my contribution.

I can't imagine why you'd need it - but my phone number is _____

Most sincerely.

Mary M. Lukens

Old Colony Historical Society

66 Church Green
Taunton, Massachusetts 02780-3463
(508)822-1622

Marcus A. Rhodes, Jr.
President

Miss Lisa A. Compton
Director

12-8-92

Dear Daria,

I was interested in your project on the CA chapel, and just wanted to send you my thoughts —

I like to think of my heart as having a number of tiny compartments, into which I tuck the most special people, places and memories. That way I have them with me always. The CA chapel is in one of those little special spaces.

Whenever I visit CA (all too rarely!), I stop in to the chapel to reflect on how it combines, in one place, much that is me -- love of church architecture, music (I was Head of Chapel Music for 3 years, and still am a church organist/choir director), my spirituality, and my wonderful years at CA. The chapel [redacted] still looks and even smells the same.

Its funny, that when we were students

at CA, we would sit inside the chapel and look through the old glass windows at the world awaiting us after graduation. Now, 22 years later, I go back to that safe, sacred place, having full knowledge of what was awaiting us! Its an interesting perspective!

I wax too poetic, I fear. Hope this helps —

Lisa Compton Bellocchio '71

Concord Academy

166 Main Street
Concord, Massachusetts 01742
(508) 369-6080 • Fax (508) 369-3452

Thomas Wilcox
Headmaster

Extension 122

October 14, 1992

Ms. Daria Bolton Fisk
11 Park Street
Greenfield, MA 01301

Dear Daria,

Joanne Hoffman has come up with a wonderful idea of our approaching you to see if we could pay the expense of your recreating your chapel project for our archives for re-use from time to time at special events at Concord Academy. I told you many times while the exhibit was here, and again in Great Barrington, about how much I appreciated the wisdom, creativity, and love for CA that you brought to this project.

Is this a possibility? It would mean a lot to us.

Again, thank you for all you do for us.

Warmly,

Thomas E. Wilcox
Headmaster

TEW/mc

P.S. If you do, I'd love to "edit" my remarks!

APPENDIX C

CONCORD GRAPE ARTICLE

PERSPECTIVE

THE CHAPEL: AN ENLIGHTENING TRADITION OR EGO INDULGENCE?

By Phillipe Istanbul
Special to the *Grape*

Some things we just take for granted. Concord Academy accustoms us to conference periods, self-evaluations, inefficient announcements, lame ring begs (that's why the Junior class has been so astute in ignoring them this year), and many other little rituals that culminate in general boredom and apathy. One element of our daily routines, however, is actually liked. It is the concept of the chapel, which has successfully avoided the discussion that other ideas within the community can never avoid.

Even though the chapel might be a permanent fixture at CA, the whole idea of the seniors getting up in front of the entire school and telling their life experiences seems somewhat strange. Do the seniors actually

Do the seniors actually have important notions to relate, or do they simply partake in self-indulgent speeches to feed their egos?

have important notions to relate, or do they simply partake in self-indulgent speeches to feed their egos? Most people feel the answer to this question is the former; one student states that "the chapel is a long-standing tradition that should not be changed." Some look at the spewing of personal information more closely and discover that the chapel is as pretentious and self-righteous as the previous quotation. After a rigorous chapel evaluation, it would appear that chapel-bashers can justify their cynicism in the tradition. The charlatan chapel lovers are proven cheeseparings.

First of all, chapels are premature. With all the hugging and kissing, one would think that something incredible has happened to the chapel-giver. Actually, the speaker is just a student, and will have to attend classes like everybody else that day. In fact, the nearest important episode that will occur in the speaker's life is graduation, and that may be up to nine months away. People do not yell for a speech when the speaker has no recent accomplishment to brag about. Actually, lots of bragging goes on at chapels for no apparent reason. Such people have usually let everybody know their less-than-impressive feats beforehand, in a similarly annoying fashion.

This lack of important events surrounding the chapels leads to the fact that the seniors have nothing profound to say. Far too often, we have been subjected to boring accounts of family interactions, often resulting in an embarrassment of the chapel-giver's siblings or parents. The most tragic result of this occurrence is that the family members, who trusted their CA student, will probably never be able to retaliate (especially the young sibling who will attend another school without chapels, turned off from CA due to his or her public humiliation).

Then again, there is always the interesting trip to Bora Bora, coupled with the senior who, after shedding his or her J. Crew jacket, provides a commentary on the oppression of foreign peoples and admires the vandalized, wasted sheets on the chapel walls. Lastly, there is the don't-you-feel-sorry-for-me-chapel, in which the senior describes a childhood trauma that is usually worth hearing, but cheapened by the abundance of useless chapels polluting our school.

To expand on the allusion to the spray-painted sheets decorating the walls of the building, the issue of chapel signs should be addressed. While chapel signs might indicate nice wishes from one student to another, they really function as standardized measures of that person's popularity. The more chapel signs, the more one is aware of that person's social success at CA. That is not the only problem with chapel signs. In short, they waste paper. The paper signs can contain messages that are either stupid, long, or some combination of both.

Students should just tell the person giving the chapel what they otherwise would have put on a sign (for long messages it would save time), and definitely stop writing things like "chappy hapel," and "happy chappy," which were probably funny in the 70's. As for the sheets, we should use them during assembly when we really need them. (We could also use the pillow cases, since those seats in the PAC are so uncomfortable.)

While the signs might not be an obvious problem with chapels, the facts that the speeches are used as excuses to swear and play one's favorite songs should be apparent to everybody. The seniors seize their chance to say important things, many of them four-

While chapel signs might indicate nice wishes from one student to another, they really function as standardized measures of that person's popularity

letter words. The songs played on the great new sound system probably take up more time than the speaking. I love sitting in a cold building listening to loud music, don't get me wrong. What annoys me is that I don't know what goes on behind the podium, which, judging from the giggles emanating from the stage, is hilarious.

Instead of jamming into the overcrowded and frigid chapel so early in the morning, we should sleep. That way, we would be prepared for a school day free of a chapel that we would sleep through anyway. Despite this objection, I think I'll fill the chapel when my time comes. I'll talk about my opposition to chapels, and how the school should abandon them. Either that or my trip to Florida, where the people sleep on bare mattresses and let their kids grow up before they give speeches.

APPENDIX D

WILCOX '93 GRADUATION SPEECH EXCERPT

Class processes, sings song, processes to seats

Linden welcomes visitors, congratulates class, introduces Tom

Tom speaks:

Good morning and welcome to Concord Academy as we celebrate the graduation of the Concord Academy Class of 1993.

This is a bittersweet moment for all of us. It is sweet because our students have realized their dreams and are before us today to be honored for their individual and collective achievements, and it is bitter because we hate to see them go. None of us can remember when a group has so graced the school. We have of course had many individual seniors in recent history whose departure we mourned, but no one with whom I have spoken can remember as genuinely gracious a *group* as we have assembled here today.

1993 was the winter of our discontent, as CA seemed to confront all the challenges facing American education in a single three month period. From free speech to hate speech, from harassment to stereotyping to intergenerational conflict, we faced it all, but somehow, and we believe it is due to the generous spirit of this class, we emerged from it into one of the most productive and happiest springs in anyone's memory.

Issues arrive early at this dynamic community, and we always take them on directly. Somehow this spring we found common ground and have learned from each other. The all-but-inevitable friction between seniors and their school never arose. We owe this understanding, *and it is not blind acceptance*, to the group before you. They have doubtless been well led by Joanne Hoffman, their class officers and faculty advisors, but the true measure of mutual insight and cohesiveness comes from the whole group, and we can thank the entire class as we reflect on the year.

Behind you is the Elizabeth B. Hall Chapel. Our students seem to pass from adolescense to adulthood as they complete their chapels and are greeted by their friends. And those chapels told us wonderful stories - of courage, humor, bravery, faith, disillusionment, loss, gain, love, friendship, discrimination, alienation, reaffirmation, and gratitude to the fellow students and teachers who guided them through the often painful high school years. We believe that the soul of our school lies in that chapel, and the souls that were bared there, in a passage

that is both public and private, have deepened that our collective soul and added to the moral and intellectual integrity that is at the heart of Concord Academy.

Our students are remembered not for academic or artistic or athletic accomplishments or by names carved in wood, but by their messages in that intimate space, and those messages will help shape the next generation of Concord Academy students. Whether it is understanding the masks that some must wear to survive an alien environment, or hearing about coming to America and learning a third or fourth language and having to take on a fifth, or learning about living by confronting dying, or confronting and controlling disorders, or growing up with the loneliness of being different, or demanding that the administration be fair in all of its policies, our hearts are opened and our minds are broadened by these often brilliant soliloquies. New Academy initiatives grew in part from lessons learned in senior chapels. New England Citybridge, a fifteen month program to help inner city youth make the transition to highly academic secondary schools, was inspired in part by chapel messages. The message about the need for change was so articulately stated that we introduced the author to an officer from the DeWeWitt Wallace Readers' Digest Foundation. That interview and other work by community members led the board of that organization to award us a three year renewable grant of $370, 000 to fund programs that will make Concord a substantially different and better school. New support programs, from help for victims of abuse to renewed sensitivity to body image issues, from understanding class issues, and the needs of those in the middle, to providing language and cultural support for students from foreign lands were inspired by our seniors' words. Concord Academy can never forget you; you have had an indellieble effect upon us.

Among the more poignant moments was when several seniors, graduates of Friends' School, asked for commuity silence. I ask you to join them now in a minute of silence as we consider the past four years of growth and the hope for the world that this wonderful group of young people represents.

Silence

And these students helped set a tone of service and excellence that has strengthened us and the community beyond. From raising thousands of dollars by selling beautiful pottery for Rosie's Place, a shelter for homeless women to leading us to new horizons of understandng through a Gay Straight Alliance, from sponsoring not one or two but three student newspapers to growing as performing artists to the point that outside observers compared this year's musical dance, and theatrical performances to those found in leading samll colleges and similarly likened films photographs, quilts, drawings, painitngs, ...

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE CHAPELS

Martha Taft's Chapel, C.A. '65

Chapel Talk: Wednesday, March 17th 1965

Lord grant, that as we come to thee, through the crowded ways of life, we may be still, and know that thou art God.

Our Father ...

This morning I would like to talk to you about the chapel: why I like it, and what it means to me. Every morning we all come to chapel, listen to a speaker, sing hymns, and then leave. Sometimes the speaker is interesting, sometimes not, but if not, there are always other ways to occupy yourself: You can admire the old beams or the carvings (one of my favourite occupations is to stare at the W in the carving which was carved all the way through the board, and had to be patched), or you can just think about anything you would like: Your algebra test, the coming Spring, or whether you have english lab today or not.

Coming to chapel every morning can give one a sense of security, and is a nice way to start the day. But it is not this part of the chapel that means so much to me. What I enjoy is the fact that the doors are always open, and one can come in at any time, and for any reason. On weekends or after school, anyone can come in and read, or look around, or just sit and think. It doesn't matter what you are wearing, or what kind of mood you are in. The chapel is a place for anything at any time: You can walk up and inspect the altar or the organ, you can go upstairs to the little chapel in the balcony, or you can think about what you would like to say when it is your turn to give chapel. The chapel is both a place for the school as a whole, and a place for each individual in the school to come into whenever she wants.

For four years at Concord Academy, I had a friend. We were very much like ordinary friends: we did ridiculous things together, like making tractor tracks in the snow from the senior steps to the chapel each winter, or tying a Red ribbon around the cupola the night before the outdoor meet. This sort of think we both enjoyed. We also had our differences: She could never understand french, while I found myself taking as many languages as possible. She was in Glee Club and Choir, but often almost refused to sit next to me in Vespers, because my voice cracked so. We would fight occasionally, but usually made it up quickly, and laughed about it later.

From this, one could come to the conclusion that Cecily and I were just ordinary, good friends. Perhaps this is true, but I like to think that we were more than this, that we were special friends: We understood each other, and could sit for any length of time without talking, but all the time communicating. Each understood the others moods, and each was willing to give a little bit for the other. We knew each others likes and dislikes, and respected them. There was very little about either of us that the other didn't know and understand.

Cecily and I enjoyed many things together here at Concord, but there was one thing especially that we had in common: This was our feeling about the chapel. We were on chapel committee together, which means that we held doors, and cleaned it together once a month. Each time we cleaned, we would first have a great battle over whose turn it was to clean the brass, while the other would have to push the monster vacuum cleaner around, always succeeding in dropping it down the stairs. One of our favourite jobs was changing the candles. One of our unfavourite was dusting the floor.

As painful as much of this cleaning may seem, both of us took great pride in it, and really enjoyed it. After cleaning the chapel, both of us would usually sit for a while, on the altar steps, or wherever we happened to be, sometimes talking, sometimes just thinking about what the chapel meant to us: It meant one Spring spent building the steeple, or a day spent raising the bell. It meant the letter hanging in the back written by Fra Giovanni to a friend. It meant Mrs. Hall's speeches in Vespers or morning chapel. It meant lighting the candles, or passing the plate, sitting upstairs alone, or downstairs with friends. It meant friendship, with both silence and communication.

To us, both together and alone, the chapel meant many things. To you, both as an individual and as part of a school, it can mean just as much. You have only to remember that the chapel is yours.

Hymn 51

Announcements

Hymn 110

For glimpses of beauty, for hours of truth, for tastes of justice and the feel of freedom, for music and mirth, for love and laughter, Lord, we love thy world, this nation, and this place.

O God, take our minds and think through them; Take our lips and speak through them, and take our hearts and set them on fire!

(William Sloane Coffin)

Martha Taft, CA '65

CA Notebook

Chapel Talk

by Katrina Pugh '83

Three times a week the entire school begins the day in the Concord Academy Chapel, a tradition that has continued since the Chapel was first erected in the formal garden in 1956. Many of these Chapels are given by members of the senior class, as well as by faculty. The talks have evolved from a "traditional" chapel service with hymns and readings from the Bible into an opportunity for CA seniors to reflect on their lives and offer advice to underclassmen. One of the outstanding Chapels of the 1982-83 school year was given by Katrina Pugh '83, whose talk is reprinted here.

Like Voltaire's Candide, who travels all over the world in quest of "le meilleurs des mondes possibles," I have sought a perfect formula for existence. Hungry for answers, I devoured the advice of others. Without questioning it, I compiled it into a set of behavioral codes for my actions. My mind was like a blank scrapbook into which I meticulously recorded the words of my elders, my parents, and my peers. During the past two years, I have reviewed and reevaluated that scrapbook, and hence my own life. From that conglomeration of others' philosophies I have created my own.

The book could be divided into chapters, each a list of mores governing some aspect of my life. The first chapter might be headed "How to be the Perfect Student." I remember my fourth grade teacher's advice to me: "Hand in your homework on time, neatly, with all the i's dotted and all the t's crossed, and you'll get a gold star." In eighth grade, I had an English teacher whose biggest piece of advice to me was "You should avoid using the linking verb 'to be.' " I went through that entire year writing SORRY in block letters after every "was" or "is." Even in my personal letters I wrote "How are (SORRY) you? I am (SORRY) fine." At Concord Academy the "How to be a Perfect Student" chapter grew more and more dense. Mr. Teichgraeber, my sophomore English teacher, advised our class that "To write a good essay, you must provide evidence through specific examples." On one analysis of a poem by John Donne, I included so many "specific examples" that my teacher's comment back to me was "Katrina, you found each tree, but you missed the forest."

The second chapter could be called "How to be the Best Athlete " I read Jim Fixx's advice in *The Complete Book of Running* with the ardor of Shakespeare reading Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Because it said that the best runners have minimum body fat, I tried to totally eliminate my own. My coaches advised me to run intervals on the track. So I developed a rigorous schedule of alternating 6- to 10-mile runs with speed workouts. Even on the most humid summer afternoon my running shoes did not collect dust. I ran so much to keep myself "in shape" over the summer that by the time the cross-country season began in the fall, my muscles were too weary to race well. I soon learned what Alan Sillitoe meant by *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner.*

The third chapter might be headed "How to be an Accomplished Artist." My first art instructor advised me to "Draw what you see, not what you think you see." So I endeavored to reach the precision of photography. In my ceramics class I created a hand out of red terra cotta clay so like my own that when my neighbor saw it she screamed. I discovered my downfall in the words of Leonardo da Vinci: "The painter who draws merely by practice and by eye, without any reason, is like a mirror which copies everything placed in front of it, without being conscious of their existence." Now I had *sketched* the tree but missed the forest.

The fourth chapter could be called "How to be the Perfect Musician." The words "practice makes perfect" always rang in my ears as I stumbled into my fourth grade flute class. So I practiced my flute with the ardor of a tuba player. Later my teachers taught me that dynamics, or volume, were indispensable to good playing. I blew those shrill fortes so loudly on my flute that my cat meowed in protest and my family fled from the room.

The final, and the most contradictory, chapter in my scrapbook should be entitled "How to Create a Healthy Diet." As long as I can remember, someone has always advised me what to eat. I learned that nitrites and smoked foods are carcinogenic, that the body cannot digest hydrogenated fats, that cholesterol leads to heart disease, that sugar causes sluggishness, and that just about every product on the market contains some chemical, the name of which only a chemistry teacher can pronounce. I quoted *The Natural Foods Catalogue* at the dinner table as if it were the Bible. At one point I would not eat sweets, fried foods, cured meats, salt, or anything with an ingredient having more than six letters in its name. In the morning, when my father read the paper, I read the ingredients on the cereal boxes. However, the lunch table was rather lonely for me. No one wants to hear that his bologna sandwich will give him cancer.

By the time I was sixteen, my overflowing scrapbook had become Canon Law, and, unfortunately, a substitute for my own value judgements. It was the catalyst for the creation of an automaton — an ascetic one at that. I knew only self-discipline, the supression of all my natural desires. A voice from within compelled me to run faster, to study harder, or to practice longer. I lived in the constant fear of the consequences of my actions.

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Chapel

Then the people around me started offering a new kind of advice. "Take it easy," they would plead. "Why don't you stop and smell the roses?" Now, I began looking closer at the pages in my scrapbook. I began questioning myself, as Don Juan does in hell in G.B. Shaw's play *Man and Superman:* "What made this brain of mine, do you think? Not the need to move my limbs; for a rat with half my brains moves as well as I. Not merely the need to do, but the need to know what I do, lest in my blind efforts I should be slaying myself."

But I was terrified of becoming lazy and worthless. Fortunately, I had the support of my family and friends. My sister wrote in one of her letters: "Katrina, I would love you just as much if you didn't win all the races, because by having fewer achievements, you would be less like a Greek God and more like me."

Now that inner voice had finally met its challenger. A new voice cried out from the depths of my soul. I recognized it. It was my own. I looked around at all the people and their friends and felt like an outsider. I, who had considered socializing a poor use of time, was lonely. I learned that the most important part of life is friendship. But friendship takes time. One must be willing to listen patiently and to tolerate. To be stingy with time is like trying to bake a cake for ten minutes at 500° instead of thirty minutes at 350°. The consistency comes out all wrong. A delicious friendship takes slow-baking.

I have found that the benefits of advice depend not so much on the altruistic source, but on the ear upon which it falls. I still believe in the ideal of perfection — that is, until it limits or destroys. To anyone I meet today, my piece of advice would be: "Do not become so enamored with your goals that you cannot enjoy your progress. Happiness is found along the way, not only at the end of the road."

Rachel Countryman's Chapel '87, C.A. Admissions & Financial Aid Administrator

A Little Bit White

Originally presented as a chapel at Concord Academy in the fall of 1987, this talk is reprinted with permission from *Independent School, spring 1988.*

By Rachel Countryman

My parents drove to Michigan in 1962 to get married. It was the only state where they could get married without their parents' consent. All of the other states that didn't have a parental consent regulation were in the South, where it was illegal for a white man to marry a black woman.

After the ceremony they went back to New Haven, where the government did accept their marriage, and it didn't matter that their parents would not. Still, every time they went to Clark's Dairy for milkshakes, if my mother ordered vanilla and my father ordered chocolate, the waiter always brought my mother the chocolate and my father the vanilla.

When they had children, my parents encountered more people who did not easily accept their difference. People often eyed the strange trio of my mother, my brother, and me. They would follow us around the New Haven green, and when my mother bought popcorn for us, they would ask, "Does their mother let them eat popcorn?" They must have sensed that this woman was more than just a babysitter to these two little "white" children, but they refused to admit that she could be their mother.

It wasn't just New Haven either. When my family moved to Philadelphia a few years later, I was made acutely aware of my difference. One day, when I was playing hopscotch on the front walk of our house, an old white woman stopped and asked me how to get to the park. Just as she realized that I wasn't really old enough to give directions, my mother walked out onto the porch.

"Oh, is that your maid?" the woman asked. "Perhaps she can help me."

In both of these cases, the ambiguity of my racial background made people confused and uncomfortable. They had difficulty seeing that I was anything but white. I didn't really know what I was either, and have often wondered what to call myself.

Rachel Countryman is an assistant director of admissions and director of financial aid.

I remember when Philip's mother brought his new adopted baby sister to Kindergarten. The whole class crowded around, trying to get the best view. When the baby was at last unwrapped of all her blankets so we could see her face, many of the children were confused about why the mother was white and the baby black. My best friend Jackie offered an explanation.

"Well, Rachel is white and her mom is black."

Rachel and her brother Matthew in New Haven, January 1966.

Overhearing this, I corrected her. "No, my momma is brown, and I'm just a little bit white."

Twelve years later, when I had to fill out college applications, "a little bit white" was not a choice. An item on the applications said, "Describe Yourself." I immediately thought, "Well, let's see. I'm about five-foot three. I have brown hair and brown eyes. I like math and art, and ..." But then my eye would skip down to the next line of one-word descriptions: "Black _____, White _____, Other _____ ." At first I skipped over the first two and decided to mark "Other," but I didn't know what to write on the line next to it.

"Mulatto" was one option. I had never heard that word until I was sixteen, and then I was overjoyed that there was a real word for me. It meant that I wasn't such an oddity. A whole word wouldn't exist if there weren't a lot of people who needed the label. When I looked the word up in the dictionary, however, I realized I couldn't use it. The definition read, "A person of mixed Negro and White ancestry, from the Spanish for 'mule.'"

I've been called other names—"half-breed," "black-and-white milkshake," "Oreo cookie"—but these, too, were unacceptable. The last one has always puzzled me. It is a term used for black people who associate too much with white people. Like an Oreo cookie, they are black on the outside but white on the inside. The term seemed inappropriate for me, since I don't look very black on the outside, and I don't feel very white on the inside. Sometimes I joke that I'm more like white chocolate, but that doesn't really fit, either.

The word "biracial" was a possibility; it is less offensive, but it is also less descriptive. Someone who is Arab and Sudanese is also biracial. That person is even a mix of Caucasian and Negroid, as I am, but we are quite different. The word "biracial" is ambiguous; it can be used only when I am available for clarification, so I decided it wasn't acceptable for college applications. Without a word to explain which "Other" I was, I decided not to check that box. I was left with "Black" or "White."

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There is a long history of black people passing as white in order to escape racial oppression in America. Before the 1960s, passing was often a form of social suicide. In the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, black people who were able to pass got jobs that were available only to whites, and they often married white people. As they moved further into white social circles, they had to sever all of their ties to the black community. To associate even with their parents would be to risk losing all that they had achieved as "white" people.

I didn't want to pass. By putting white on my college applications, I would have been choosing not to associate myself with my mother's family and history.

There is another aspect of passing that I didn't want to be part of. When I was six, I went to a cousin's wedding, and was surprised at many of the guests. I asked my mother, "Why are there so many *white* people here?" My brother and I were usually the only even partially white people at family gatherings on my mother's side. She explained to me, though, that we *were* the only ones. Those white people that I saw were only passing for white.

In this case, there was a whole community of people, not just isolated individuals, who passed when in the mainstream. Here they were black, but a very light black—the lighter the better. On greeting my mother and

Still, every time they went to Clark's Dairy for milkshakes, if my mother ordered vanilla and my father ordered chocolate, the waiter always brought my mother the chocolate and my father the vanilla.

her two "white" children, the grandmother of the groom said, "*This* is how children are supposed to look."

The community believes that one should *be* black but *look* white. They privilege those who have white skin and straight hair on the basis of an essentially racist assumption that white is better. I didn't want to deny my black roots to the white universities to which I was applying, so I decided to check "Black" on my college applications.

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When I went to college, I had only once before been in a situation where most people didn't know I'm biracial. At my previous school, which I attended for thirteen years, everyone knew me and my mother, who was head of the mathematics department there. I was nervous about going away to school. Would my classmates automatically think I was white? What would happen when they found out I am not?

During the summer after my high school graduation, I received several mailings to incoming freshmen. Included in the information were pamphlets and letters about being a black student at a predominantly white institution. I was told that I would be assigned a special floating counselor for minority students, and I was given information about a tutoring job at the Afro-American Cultural Center. On my second day of school, I went to the center for an interview.

At the Afro-Am house, the heads of the tutoring program asked me about my tutoring experience and interests. As we talked, I thought that they were a lot more nervous than I was. Finally one of them asked me if I had a floating counselor. My mind raced in a panic; there were so many new terms to memorize.

"Yes," I answered after a short delay.

"What's his or her name?"

That is a dangerous thought—to be black on paper but white in person.

I had no idea. It wasn't until I got back to my room that I realized that they were trying to ask me, "Are you black?" It had never occurred to me that they would be confused. In the past, I had been concerned that people would assume I was white and be disappointed to find out that I am not. Again, these interviewers assumed that I was white, but in this case, they were quite relieved to find out that I am not.

And so for the first few weeks of college, I carefully showed pictures of my family to everyone who lived near me. I wanted them to know right away that I am biracial, so I could avoid any later hurt feelings. I didn't want

Rachel and Matthew in London, where the Countryman's lived for a year, March 1967

"Because you are a little bit different," she said, "some people won't understand; they may not want to. But it is your job to teach them."

to get close to anyone who would be shocked.

I soon forgot about showing everyone my family pictures. I decided that I couldn't worry about providing a buffer for people who might get upset when they found out. I still wonder about the time when it will happen, but I have prepared myself for it.

The only confrontation I had in college concerned the National Achievement Scholarship for Outstanding Negro Students, which I received partly as a result of having called myself black when applying to schools. One of my next-door neighbors thought it odd that I accepted a scholarship for black students. He argued that, because in most cases a black student doesn't receive as good an education as a white student, and doesn't have as good an economic situation, he or she deserves some extra help; reverse discrimination is needed to set things straight. But, his argument went on, I didn't fit into that scheme. People didn't see me as black, so they didn't discriminate against me as black. He therefore thought that I didn't deserve or need that scholarship, and that it was deceitful of me to call myself black.

I don't think my neighbor or any one else really knows what "black" is. If it is just the color of someone's skin as seen by other people, then perhaps he is right; I am not black. There have been enough times, though, when someone who knew nothing about my parents has asked, "Are you black?" to make me think it isn't just skin color.

In the South, for example, people can tell from facial features, not just skin color, whether someone is black or white. Over the summer, I visited a friend who lives in Georgia. When he introduced me to a former teacher of his, she knew immediately that I wasn't white. Turning to him, she smiled and said, "Now, I'm lookin' at those lips."

I don't think that race is a matter of either skin or faces. It is really a matter of culture, and culture is passed down through the family. My family is black. My parents got divorced when I was four, and from then on, until I went to college, I lived with my mother. The three adults closest to me when I was growing up were my mother and her parents, all of them black.

My college neighbor's argument didn't stop at the dispute over my race. "Even if you are *almost* black," he went on, "you haven't really suffered." He was wrong about scholarships like the one I had. They are not intended just to make up for individuals' suffering; they are intended to make up for everyone's suffering in many different ways.

When my grandmother was eighteen, she received a tuition scholarship to attend a black women's college on the other side of town. She was to be the first person in her family to go to college. But in the end she was unable to go because she couldn't afford the trolley fare to and from classes every day. To her, my scholarship was a way to make up for what she was cheated out of. It didn't help her directly, but because it helped me, she has less anger.

My grandmother and I have always been close. When I was younger and just starting to think about my race, she taught me an important lesson. "Because you are a little bit different," she said, "some people won't understand; they may not want to. But it is your job to teach them."

National Achievement Scholarships give more people the chance to teach others. When black people win scholarships to Ivy League schools, their being there and being visible teaches everyone that black people can study in these places, and can succeed—something that a lot of people of both races do not believe.

Still, I was different from other black students. When I was in high school, my mother and I used to joke that a nearby all-girls' independent school would have admitted me in a second. After all, they could double their black population without even showing it. That is a dangerous thought—to be black on paper but white in person. It can be an advantage, though. It allows me an inroad. My next-door neighbor at Yale wouldn't have learned anything from me if my skin weren't white. Neither would the boy at horseback-riding day camp we both attended who told me he hated "niggers and Eyetaliens." I asked him if he hated me. "No, of course not," he replied. Then I told him, "I'm Black." He had trouble speaking after that, but I knew he had learned something.

Although I am no longer a student, my situation is similar in many ways. I am still in a predominantly white, elite educational institution, and now that I am a teacher, my grandmother's advice that I must educate people who don't understand about race is even more important.

The task can be difficult. White people are often not very good students of race. Sometimes it is like trying to teach algebra to a student who cannot see what to do next in solving an equation. Without any background or intuitive feel for the problem, the student can't take the next step.

So it is with white people who either will not or cannot understand what it must be like for Blacks. Guilt and ignorance about the lives of black people in America hold them back and sap their desire to learn. Just as I want my algebra students to be active learners and not sit back and wait for me to feed them the answers, so I want

I want white people to struggle with the race problem on their own, at least sometimes, and not depend on me to give them the "black perspective."

white people to struggle with the race problem on their own, at least sometimes, and not depend on me to give them the "black perspective."

The question of my race does not come up much any more. When it does, though, I am equipped with a definition. "I am biracial," I tell people who ask, and explain further if they still seem confused. I am content with this solution, but even now I wonder about it sometimes.

A few weeks before my chapel talk, some people asked me what I was going to talk about. Before telling them that it would be about being biracial, I always paused, wondering if they knew about me. It is difficult to have a constant feeling in the back of my mind that my race is something people aren't used to.

At the same time though, I know it is important for them to take the time, and for me to give them the time, to get used to it. Being biracial is for all of that.

Rachel Countryman attended Germantown Friends School in Philadelphia for thirteen years, went on to earn her B.A. in sociology at Yale University, and came to Concord in 1986. She is a house director in Tucker House, taught mathematics for two years, and now serves as an assistant director of admissions and director of financial aid.

The Countryman family singing at a community picnic in Philadelphia, March 1968.

Los Guantes, 1988

Mallika Chopra's Senior Chapel

July 24, 1988
Los Guantes, Dominican Republic

I am sitting on an old, decrepit rocking chair outside the house of Don Julio Guantes. I will be living here for the next four weeks. Chairs here are very valuable possessions; my family has eight. Salle and Rosi sit on the ground beside me trying to copy the letters that I have written which form their names. They are probably fourteen years old, but age and dates of birth are not very important here. There are also three baby girls, Porura, Leleyla, and Banesa, who have mango pulp smeared all over their bodies as they eat and play with their food at the same time. Behind me, leaning against a tree, is Niniing, a mentally retarded boy. He cannot speak, but when he is alone he can be heard grunting and neighing to himself. He spends his day wandering with the cows or sitting by himself and watching the other children play. In the eyes of his family and the village, he is an animal.

Casually pecking at my feet are two chickens, and a few feet away Carlo Manuel pokes his stick cruelly into the teats of a milking goat. There are three dogs scavenging the grounds for whatever they can find. The house itself is actually a shack made out of wood painted with gaudy colors—red, turquoise blue, and dark green—splashed carelessly on the walls. The ceiling is a hot tin roof. Dust particles dance and oscillate in the beams of sunlight that filter in through the cracks and holes of the building. This is a home. Nine people and an assorted number of goats, dogs, chickens, and roosters, all live here together happily. The entire space is less than the living room of my house on Huckleberry Hill in Lincoln, Massachusetts. There is no electricity or running water, and the only way to come into the village is by crossing the river and walking or riding horses along paths.

This summer I spent a month in the Dominican Republic as a volunteer health worker for an organization called Amigos de las Americas. The village I lived in was tucked away in the hills, about an hour's walk away from the nearest roads. There were two other Americans in my village, Keri and Lisa, and in exchange for living with families, we talked with the people about community sanitation and worked with them to make latrines to prevent the spread of sickness and disease. The people in our village were very simple, did not have much money, and were uneducated, yet I learned more about life from them than I could have through any formal education

I came to the village self-assured and confident, almost a little arrogant about my background, my education at Concord Academy, my knowledge about the basic principles of hygiene and nutrition, my sophistication, my opinions about how things should be. I came here with the idea that I would teach these people something that they did not know, that I would show them the right things to do. But I was in for a surprise. My ideas about intelligence were shattered by a group of people who had never learned to read or write. There was a simplicity and an innocence and a sensitivity among them that disarmed me. I realized that the easy spontaneity of these people, their careless laughter and their light-hearted

My ideas about intelligence were shattered by a group of people who had never learned to read or write.

I realized that true intelligence is the elegance of simplicity.

joyfulness, were attributes that no amount of education or material affluence could buy. I was touched by their warmth, their openness, their casual acceptance of everything, and their intense feeling. These people were themselves. They did not put on a new mask for every situation, a new mannerism for every encounter. Suddenly I was totally at ease, totally at home, and I realized that true intelligence is the elegance of simplicity.

Our last night in Los Guantes was the most compelling. We had been told that there was going to be a fiesta that night. As Lisa, Keri, and I walked to Hernando's house along the familiar paths, guided only by starlight, we heard in the distance the echo of beating drums. The sound pierced the still night, and slowly my feet began to pick up the rhythm. When we reached the house, there were fifty people outside dancing, singing, and drinking rum. The beats and chants came from inside, though. We could hardly enter the room, but as we did, we saw familiar faces smiling at us. We encountered fifteen people swaying to the pulse of calypso. On the table lay a picture of the Virgin Mary and the baby Christ. Surrounding it were a bunch of flowers and two bottles of wine which were occasionally passed around the room. The room beyond was hidden by a torn blanket, but as soon as we entered my sister Salle excitedly took my hand and led us in. Lying on the bed, dressed in a lace gown, was Hernando's old mother. She was very pale, her eyes barely open, her body shaking silently; she was about to die. But as we sat down beside her, her eyes twinkled with joy, and she tried to lift her hand in greeting. She was calm and totally at peace. The whole village had come to wish her good-bye in the only way they knew how—good-byes as well as welcomes were occasions for celebration. Death was not seen as the end of a journey but the awakening to a newer reality. When I returned home and went to sleep that night it was 1:30 The sound of the drums filled my dreams and the music continued all night. At 4:30, as the first rays of sun punctuated the violet clouds of dawn and the hens announced another day, Papau slipped into the unknown. Silence more powerful and louder than the din of the festival pervaded the atmosphere as the sober truth of her passing away became the startling reality of our experience.

This next song is dedicated to the villagers of Los Guantes and to Kerri and Lisa. It reminds me of the night we used to sing songs to Andre's guitar while watching the stars in the clear sky above.

I dedicate this chapel to my family. They are the most important people in my life. It is for my father, for his knowledge and dedication; my mother for her patience and sacrifice; and for my brother, Gautam, whom I am closer to than anyone else in the world.

Mallika Chopra, a senior day student from Lincoln, Massachusetts, has been a member of the dance program and the Girls' Tennis Team during her four years at CA.

Linda Whitlock's Chapel, '91, C.A. Admissions & Marketing Administrator

CHAPEL

Freedom and Remembrance

BY LINDA WHITLOCK,

ASSISTANT HEAD FOR MARKETING AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS

HELLO. MY NAME IS LINDA WHITLOCK and this is my chapel.

Parkman Howe once told me that all teachers teach one thing. Regardless of the course, the lesson, the topic, only one thing is being taught. Parkman, I think you're right and, in fact, I believe that we adults talk about only one thing.

For me, the concept which enthralls is freedom. You entered the Chapel to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, conducted by Leonard Bernstein last year at Christmas at the Berlin Wall. It was an ode to freedom.

I will tell you a story, my family story, to let you know why freedom means so much to me.

I was born in 1947 in Richmond, Virginia, the capital of the Confederacy. Although the ubiquitous statues of Confederate leaders like Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and J.E.B. Stuart seemed to belong to and honor a distant time, *my* Richmond was still a city divided by race. The white community and the black community were separate and not equal. Members of my community had three movie theaters in which we were allowed. No first-run movies played there. When *Ben-Hur* opened in 1959, my family had to make a two-hour trip to Washington, D.C. to see it. The local drive-in theater was segregated by a chain-link fence which ran down the middle of the parking and viewing area. There was a playing area for black children and a playing area for white children. There were separate windows in the concession area.

Library facilities were segregated into white and colored. Drinking fountains and rest rooms had white and colored signs. Swimming pools, amusement parks, even beaches were all segregated. Miscegenation—people of different races marrying—was illegal until 1967 when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Virginia statute. My husband and I could not have lived together in that state.

This is what segregation meant to me. "Jim Crow," as the system of *de jure* segregation was known colloquially, had a very real, a very human face to me. I lived in a totally black world. My neighborhood was all black. My schools were all black. Our doctors, our dentists, our lawyers were all black. We did business with a black-owned insurance company. We devoured the black-owned weekly newspaper, the *Afro-American*. Our socializing was done exclusively among blacks.

In 1961, when I was going into the eighth grade, a few black girls—friends of mine—decided to integrate a white junior high school which was three blocks away from my house, my neighborhood school. My parents gave me the "freedom" of choosing whether I went or stayed in my all-black junior high that was on the other side of town. Having heard stories of black children in other Southern cities finding thumb tacks on their seats in school, I guess I was a coward. I didn't want to have to confront those people. I wanted more choices in school. I wanted to participate freely in the life of the school. I wanted to be a leader.

Marginality has never been a pleasant state for me. Two years later, my younger brother, who now teaches history at Middlesex, did choose to attend that school. Ken remembers a chant, which was yelled at him by jeering white students, "I smell a 'gar. A cigar? No, a niggar!"

The opportunities for protest did not pass us by. We did join picket lines. On one occasion, we protested the

Linda Whitlock and her daughter Leah.

refusal of the large department stores to let blacks use the fitting rooms to try on clothes. My father, then president of the Richmond chapter of the National Urban League, heartily embraced the public and the private civil rights battles in our hometown. Once, my father's pointed commentary on Richmond's racial mores was expressed vividly on one of our frequent Sunday outings with our family.

We stood on line for a tour of the museum-like headquarters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. To the credit of the elderly, white-haired, very white daughter of the Confederacy who was our tour guide, our visit was without incident, though no less memorable for us children. My father's frequent "tweaking" of that segregated, history-laden society gave him some sense of control, however illusory and fleeting it may have been.

I was always inspired by my family's history of intellectual achievement and political engagement. My mother's family, which since the early 1800s has lived in New York and Philadelphia, is represented most vividly by my grandfather. For thirty years my grandfather taught at Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia. The college was the black counterpart to the white University of Virginia, without the legacy of Mr. Jefferson's architecture or adequate financial support from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Concord Academy is evocative of Virginia State. The Academy's old clapboard school building looks and even smells like the buildings my grandfather inhabited. Like the Proustian madeleine, the smell of the floors in the classrooms is redolent of my beloved grandfather.

Having received a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania in 1939, my grandfather taught educational psychology. We grandchildren were regaled with stories of his undergraduate life. He walked miles across town in Philadelphia to save the princely sum of five cents, the cost of a trolley ride. He tutored in Latin and Greek to earn money for tuition. My grandfather's Uncle Joe was for years dean of Howard University's Medical School and an active civil rights advocate. Armed with a Ph.D. and an M.D., both of which he received from the University of Chicago after only five years of study, Uncle Joe used his professional and financial clout to create D.C.'s first integrated housing in a large apartment building which he and several black and white friends purchased before World War II.

My mother, a lover of American and English literature, was a gifted high-school English teacher. One of my mother's brothers became a doctor, an internist, who is charmingly effete. The other, with a Ph.D. in chemistry from Penn, was a research scientist at Du Pont until he quit in the late 1950s. Uncle Bill quit because Du Pont refused to send him to England where he was to receive an award for his work, although the company had sent many white staff scientists who had been given similar awards. Bill then went to Pennsylvania's Lincoln University, where he became notorious for the exacting academic and personal standards which he imposed on his students.

There were some strong female ancestors in my family. There was one in particular whom I'd like to tell you about. With her husband Thomas, my great-great-grandmother Sadie Dorsey was an active abolitionist in Philadelphia. She often travelled and lobbied with Frederick Douglass, the more famous black abolitionist and orator. Sadie was also a friend of John Brown, the white abolitionist who organized a doomed slave revolt in Harper's Ferry.

There is a powerful story, probably apocryphal, about Sadie and Frederick's arrival at the White House for President Lincoln's Second Inaugural ball. (My great aunt has the actual invitation, which I covet!) When the two black guests appeared at the door, the doormen refused them entrance. Tall Lincoln spotted tall Douglass and yelled above the din, "Ah, my friends, Frederick and Sadie." Naturally, they were then allowed to enter.

I do have more recent stories of family courage. My father, while head of an all-black, meagerly supported school in a very poor neighborhood, developed Richmond's first program for gifted and talented children. The academic performance of his students soared. Years later, he was outraged to discover that the central administration had steadfastly refused to publicize his students' standardized test scores because they surpassed those of *all* other elementary schools.

The first in his family to graduate from college, my father was also a gifted athlete who was a "colored" all-American punter at Virginia State. The "Educated Toe" was his sobriquet. Wanting to play in the National Football League, he was denied a chance to try out for the Washington Redskins because the NFL was segregated. His rejection letter is hanging on the wall of his study. Daddy was also one of the first black Marines, and he has written a book about the experience, which was largely one of institutional and personal discrimination.

Because of my family's accomplishments in the face of oppressive conditions, I have never felt able to use my race as an excuse for not doing, being, or thinking what I wanted. Moreover, the "redemptive promise and power in human suffering" described by Harvard psychiatrist and author Robert Coles was vivid to me because of my own life and the lives of my ancestors. And because of the lives of the Jews.

It was during my adolescence that I developed an

There was a playing area for black children and a playing area for white children. There were separate windows in the concession area.

The Whitlock family in 1954. Linda is at the far right.

interest in the Holocaust. Treblinka. Auschwitz. Buchenwald. The names fascinated and repulsed this black, fifth-generation Episcopalian who knew no Jews. Somehow, I understood that segregation in the American South in the 1960s and Nazism in Germany in the 1940s had the same evil antecedents.

Listen to Diana Abu-Jaber, a Palestinian-American writer in the current issue of *Ploughshares*: "The spirit of the survivors of the Holocaust said, Never again. Never again the unspeakable, never again the blood-letting, the animal, the empty bodies, hearts of murderers. The spirit of Mormons. Puritans, of all persecuted said, Never again."

As the Korean grocery store owner said as he confronted the mob in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, "I black. I black." Or, President Kennedy's, *"Ich bin Berliner."* I was also a Jew. *Ich bin Jude*. Empathy is both cerebral and visceral, and depends on forgiveness which is freely bestowed.

I will end with the story of Ruby Bridges, a six-year-old black girl whom Robert Coles befriended in 1961 and whom Coles describes in his book *Children of Crisis*. Ruby, the daughter of illiterate former sharecroppers, found herself the only black student in an all-white New Orleans school. Each morning and afternoon Ruby had to walk past jeering, menacing crowds of white adults who threatened to kill her, to poison her, to see her dead.

Coles spent time with Ruby talking about her school, her teacher, her friends and family, admiring her very revealing drawings. One day, Ruby's teacher told Coles that she had seen Ruby saying something to the menacing crowd assembled outside. While looking through the window, Ruby had been moving her lips, obviously forming words. Her teacher, however, couldn't decipher what Ruby had been saying. When asked, Ruby only said that she had been "praying for them." Fascinated by this admission, Coles gently probed.

"Ruby, so you were praying for them?" "Yes, I've added them to my list." "Your list, Ruby?" "Yes, every day I pray for my mother and my father and my sisters and my brothers and my aunts and my uncles and my cousins and my friends. Now, I pray for those people, too. Don't you think they need praying for?" "Well, Ruby, what do you say?" "I say, Please, dear God, forgive them because they don't know what they're doing."

Coles could only think of Ruby's frequent and plaintive question to him, "Is it only because of my skin?"

Many of us still ask that question. Freedom, at least, makes the answer more bearable.

Thank you.

Tracy Randall's Chapel, C.A. '91

"Well Tracy you are too black for the white people and too white for the black people" chuckled Jody as she patted me on the back. I turned to this person who I had moments ago believed was my friend. I was confused and unsure how to respond. We were discussing prejudice, racism and stereotypes. Finally came the issue of what label applied to me. I grew up as a black in a white society. I had very little contact with people of my race other than my parents. I never felt any different from the white people around me. The only thing that distinguished me from my white friends was where after playing in the sun for hours they burned and pealed where as I did not. **"START STORY"**

At the age of 7 I was big eyed , long legged and ready for the world. However , the world was not ready for me. Then I had my first encounter with racism. At that time I was oblivious to the importance of the experience. But as I grow the memory means more and more.

It was a hot sticky summer day. One of those days where the crickets made the earth sound like it was sizzling. Still nothing would keep my friend Linda and I out of the high noon sun.

"Mommy! Linda and I are going down to Becky's to swim!" I yelled quickly as to not give her a chance to say 'no'.

"Wait a minute honey. Were you invited?" My mother always made sure I was invited when I went to Becky's house in particular.

Yes Mommy! Come on let me go! o.k.! Bye!" I ran out the door and leapt off my porch to meet my waiting friend.

"Come on Trace! Let's go! Becky is waiting." She grabbed my hand and practically dragged me three blocks to Becky's house. I was more excited to see Linda than I was to goto Becky's. I was always hesitant to go to her house because her mother treated me differently.

"Hey Becky!" yelled Linda as we stood outside her house. After a minute Becky came to her window with a sad look on her face.

"Guys I got bad news. My family is moving to Glenwood in two weeks."

"Wow Beck! That's to bad. We sure are going to miss you."

"No big deal. I will visit ... anyway I guess you guys want to swim. Last one there is a rotten egg!" At that moment Becky darted away from her window and raced through her house trying to beat us to her back yard. Linda and I took off determined not to be the rotted egg, laughing so hard we could hardly run. We all reached the pool at the same time and jumped in causing a huge splash. We swam about twenty minutes laughing and playing until Becky's mother came home. She had a wrinkled face and bonny legs. She always had on patent leather red high heals.

"What's going on here?!" She stood by the edge of the pool tapping her foot. "I thought I told you Becky sweetheart ... that you could only have Linda over today because we are having company over to see the house!"

"But MOM!" wined Becky as she looked over at me. Linda and I were frozen in the water. The fierceness in her mother's voice was bone chilling.

"Tracy I am sorry but you are going to have to go home" said Becky's mom as she handed me my towel. I did not understand why I and not Linda had to home. I obeyed of course and got out of the pool. I rushed out of the back yard gate forgetting my shoes. The hot ground burned my feet.

When I arrived home my mother was in our garden planting tulips. She looked up and saw my confused eyes.

"What's wrong honey? Why are you home so early?" She stood up and gave me a reassuring smile telling me whatever happened would be alright. I ran into her inviting arms.

"Mommy, Becky's mom sent me home cause she said people were coming to see the house. Why me and not Linda? What did I do?" My mother held my arms firmly and looked

seriously into my eyes. She had me repeat what I had told her, a little slower. When I finished she told me to go in the kitchen and have a piece of fruit. She said she would be back in a moment.

After ten minutes my mother returned. She came in and let the screen door slam behind her (something she never did). I could tell she was incredibly angry by the frowns on her face.

"What happened Mommy?"

"Everything is o.k. sweetheart. You just can't play

I did not question my mother about the experience until years later. I was older and the experience made more sense. I knew by that time many people had the same "problem" as Becky's mother. At times the only way to deal with racism is to pay no attention if possible. There was nothing that could be done to make that woman feel any different about me being at her house while she was trying to sell it. Her ignorance caused unnecessary confusion in my young mind. I know today not only the young minds, but older ones too are confused about race relations in our society. I believe we are up to our necks in racism and at times are losing ground. In Websters dictionary racism is defined "as a belief about another group that causes one to have a predisposition that effects ones behavior". Incomplete information, lack of respect and prejudice all cause racism to move ahead. Multi-cultural education is needed to break down those barriers that allow racism to exist.

My parents provided me with the opportunity to have a private school education where repeatedly the majority was white. This made no difference to me until I encountered people who had been affected by stereotypes. When I entered the high school of Buckingham Browne and Nichols in my freshman

year I was greeted by a black organization with open arms. I was expected to join the schools "minority student alliance". I did go to the meetings on occasion. It was a great group of people talking about their experiences and giving their opinions. I enjoyed listening and sharing my thoughts with them. I did a lot more listening than I did talking. I grew to have a greater understanding of how important support was for a person coming into a community unlike their own. It was not that the blacks coming into this private school had problems and needed help but the school community they were coming into made it hard for them to feel comfortable. I believe at Concord Academy we tend to make our community uncomfortable for many people not apart of the racial majority. For example "Let's talk about diversity" a bit more.

I ended up not having much time to go to the group meetings. I went less frequently and finally not at all. When I stopped going some of the black students wondered why. They came to their own conclusions. According to them I walked around thinking I was special, I thought I was white or an "oreo" (black on the outside and white on the inside). I heard some of the white kids also questioned my "blackness" because I did not wear "gold" or talk "black". I felt for days after that I had to prove myself. I did not feel the need to be involved because my situation of being the only black person was no different than it had ever been. I had a strong sense of who I was. I knew I was black and did not need anyone to make me any more aware. Time would take care of that. When discussing the issue with some friends is where Jody made her comment that began this chapel. I realized it is difficult to escape stereotypes even in a circle of friends who I thought truly understood me. I believe one of the problems encountered when fighting racism is where people are unaware that they perpetuating stereotypes, thus the job becomes harder to make people aware. I believe that only through discussion can people truly begin to understand each other. At Concord we have a chance to talk and discuss. We do to a certain extent. However

when the time provided ends frequently people walk away not understanding exactly how someone feels leading to miscommmunication. This only perpetuates the ignorance. I have also seen people get tired of talking. They do not want to here it any more. Some reach a point of denial. I believe this is something they must rid themselves of. It is a natural tendency to deny. One might say "I am not doing this?", "Why talk to me?", or "I am not racist!". Statements like those only point out the extentsiveness of the problem. I would hope that everyone would address the issue within themselves. By asking a question as simple as "Are my actions influenced by my beliefs about a group?" and if so "Are my beliefs legitament?" One perpetually has to ask themselves these questions. It is a constant cycle.

Many of you have heard these same ideas about racism before, this time the words are just in a different order. Honestly, I am glad you are hearing them again. I do realize I could talk more than I already have and some of you really still would not give a dam. The majority can either choose to deal with racism and discrimination or not. I do not have that choice. I live it thus you had to hear about it.

ON ANOTHER NOTE... I must say I love my parents. They are the most incredible humans I know. My father is not only a large black gentleman but he is the most thoughtful, eloquent, educated, brilliant, amazing man I know. His actions speak louder than words. My mother is beautiful inside and out. Her love is at times suffocating. In turn, I run away only to return to what I know is good for me.

This song is for them. They could not be here today but I know they are thinking of me.

I will be eight teen on saturday. I am scared and excited for what the future holds for me. This is a time for us senior to review our lives as we enter another stage. I

know that I could not hope to have a better tribe of friends because I believe they honestly care for me. I will miss you gals and guys next year. you have taught me how to care for someone not apart of my family. In turn, you have all become a family to me.

A few RANDOM THOUHGTS:

I must admit some nights I snore like a beast. I would start a support group but I fear I am the only one. But it is very therapeutic to admit this infront of the entire school.

Samuel I miss you. Stay "Black"

Zandy you are my "Chilean cookie crumb".

Rosie we will be firm forever.

Gabe please have more faith in my words.

Jen "If you only had a brain..."

And thanks to any teacher I have ever encountered. You have taught me things I need to know and things I do not. Now I can tell the difference.

And my "Seniorly Advise" is to no matter what you do in life, never wake Marcie Rosenstock up in the middle of the night when she has a hard time getting to sleep. One of her retainers could fly out of her mouth while she is yelling at you and take your eye out.

And to anyone who is upset with me that I did not mention them "Shame on you!" You should know me better to know that I am thinking of you.

This chapel is for not only my parent but for Wrenn, Karen, Jen and Abby. You all helped me keep my sanity this year.

Joanne Hoffman's Chapel, '92, C.A. Administrator

Chapel
September 1992
Joanne P. Hoffman

I am Joanne Hoffman, and this is my third chapel which I would like to dedicate to all of us and our ability to listen carefully to all the voices in our community--particularly to your parents' voices because today I'm going to talk to you about my father. While I have spoken to you many times from this place, the act of writing this kind of talk--saying something about myself, talking about our shared goals as we begin this year together is quite a different activity from talking about some topic of immediate concern. It has the power of any reflection which liberates and, at the same time, as the seniors will attest this year, produces high anxiety.

My first chapel centered on the importance of being schooled in the art of transition, and last year's was about achieving the healthy tension necessary for balance. I guess I want to say those topics again as a way of balancing myself with those orderly ideas because this year I have decided, with a little help from my friends, to enter into some uncharted, not so safe territory with you. I would like to talk to you about some important, shaping moments in my life, which I hope will connect to some things that are important to you, to our school, and to the way we think about designing our year together. Bear with me as I struggle to find some new understanding in this community moment which calls for my story.

From Homer to Joyce, many wise people have talked about the journey being much more important than the arrival. Of course, women have a distinct advantage over men in this regard because they always ask for directions along the way. Today I would like to talk about that same theme with pieces of my own journey at the heart of the matter. On our journeys our perceptions keep changing; we adjust the seasonings or they are adjusted for us as we move away from the easily circumscribed early years with our comfortable boundaries--comfortable

because they are snug. There is an irony, of course, in this comfort because it comes with a limited perception. Whether as individuals or societies, we often seek the security of these "leaf-shadowed" visions, because they momentarily feel good. Ultimately, however, the journey away from them-- to find other centers and become better centered-- is the one we hope to take.

We need those initially defining contexts of home and school, knowing what gives us roots, but, ultimately, we need to find our wings, those ways in which we establish our own way of thinking and seeing and knowing. Just as we as a society once thought that the earth was the center of the solar system; our solar system, the center of the universe; humans, the center of all life -- with each assertion, something has come along to alter that perception. And, in the altering, we have had to move away from our smug certainties toward a more enlightened realm. The poet, Joe Bruchac, captures this notion of seeing things more broadly in his "prayer" poem from a collection called Near The Mountains :

> If we pretend
> that we are at the center, he says
> that moles and kingfishers,
> eels and coyotes
> are at the edge of grace,
> then we circle, dead moons
> about a cold sun.

I specifically have chosen this poem by an Abenaki poet not only because his words ask us about where we fit, about the perception we have of ourselves, about who we are, but also because I am currently listening to the words of Joe Bruchac in a very different way these days. As a Native American poet, he represents a little heard voice in the canon of American literature, but as a lifelong resident of the little town

of Greenfield Center where my father was born and near where I was raised in the equally small town of Corinth, NY near those same mountains that he wrote about, he also represents a voice in my own neighborhood that was not heard by me, my family, and others in my community. This man, now with over two dozen books published, was not allowed, because of racial descimination, to be part of the landscape--my landscape at that time.

I was raised in a provincial town where there was no such thing as difference -- or at least we were led to believe that -- where the voices which defined my vision sounded like this (with gratitude to Jamaica Kincaid):

> Don't chew celery or eat potato chips, it's not lady-like.
> Don't speak until you're spoken to.
> Children should be seen and not heard.
> The Catholic church is the one true church.

There was a voice--my father's-- among these which I didn't hear very clearly at the time and have been trying to listen very carefully to ever since. Perhaps I couldn't hear him through this cacaphony of small town voices, but more probably because, in my unreflective, self-absorbed youth, I wasn't paying attention. Whatever the reason, I have spent much of my journey, almost the last three decades of my life, searching for my father--his voice and his vision. And this journey has been difficult because, when I was 17, shortly before my graduation from high school, my father committed suicide.

I have been trying to find those roots, my center, which, ultimately, will allow me to have the necessary context to see a big part of who I am. My father has become a powerfully defining force who continues to shape my journey toward him so that I can move away with a clearer perspective. Because my time with him was cut short in this way, leaving me with so many unanswered questions, this legacy of fragments, I was unable to build the reservoir of images needed to sustain me. He would not be able to dance with me on my graduation day, nor tell me things would be okay

on my thirtieth birthday, nor celebrate with me as I finished my master's thesis on Robert Frost, nor cradle my baby in his arms as he once had me. With these broken images, he had given me a fallen idol and a labyrinthian quest toward him and myself.

Mostly this journey has been an internal one, but on one day several years ago, I knew that there was a place I had to go to be able to go other places. I decided to take a trip to the place where he had killed himself, to the farm, which was no longer a farm, where he had been born and raised-- clearly a place of enormous significance. As I traveled on the road he had traveled so many times, I was struck by the irony that all my life I had passed the turn which led to Dunham Pond Road, his road, and had never been there. All the time my father was alive, no one had ever taken me there; a place so close to my own town, so important, and though we had gone by it hundreds and hundreds of times, we had never turned down that road.

So, on the road he had travelled in his more mature days of work in the paper mill, I now rode to discover my roots---what ingredients went into creating the man who made me, the man who forged in me the strength needed to know, to make things as they should be. He showed me those qualities in him which are now a large part of me and are the very traits that propel me on my journey.

When I arrived at the farm I had a strange and unsettling feeling because, although I thought that I should have felt the calm which usually accompanies "coming home," nothing in this picture was familiar-- this enormous part of my heritage was essentially unknown to me. While there, however, as I began to walk his land, to get a sense of what his place must have meant to him, some strong images of what it must have been like began to form---a picture-perfect farm (180 acres worth) with a comfortable porch, productive barns and fertile gardens. I began to imagine the lively days, the energy, the activity-- the hard work that taught him and the other eight sisters and brothers respect and dignity and the value of making sure things were done just the right way. I began to feel my father's pulse in what must have been the joy of milking, the potato-planting, the birthing of the animals, so loved and so essential.

I saw the catalpa tree which he had planted for his mother and which had grown taller than the house. I felt the rocks of the stone walls he had helped to bulid-- carefully shaping the lay of this land--a design which his daughter would delight in too late for her father's dreams.

These clarifying images gave me the direction necessary to see and hear and feel those things which I had missed consciously, but which *had found* their way into my patterns-- his love of challenge, the value he placed on the restorative quality of music and the desire to know all there is to know.

One of the most striking discoveries that day was a primitive painting of a pasture scene on the inside of a tool shed door. Since it was signed by the painter--JP--I suspect that my father --Joseph Petro--was the artist. This part of his youth provided me with a small way of seeing his vision and hearing his voice and has given me *one* of the parts of his story -my pieced-together story. I wonder, for instance, why this scene was painted on the interior of that building where there is almost no light-- the scene projecting itself beyond the door to what must have been the real pasture scene. The door becomes a metaphor for so many similar experiences for me. I take the journey and I "arrive," at some resolution, but am left with so many more questions which lead me to the next place.

On that day also, Caitlin and I picked a seed pod from that catalpa tree which my father, as a boy, had planted. We planted the seeds at our house in Simsbury, Connecticut but nothing grew. Since the tree is still there in Greenfield Center, we hold out hope that someday we will be able to bring some real and symbolic life to a catalpa tree in our own backyard -- soon to be in Carlisle.

So in becoming familiar with Joe Bruchac's voice, I am able to establish one more connection to my father, to broaden my perspective, to center myself. Caitlin and I are reading one of his books, listening to a tape of his reading of Native American stories. It turns out that Bruchac's uncle, who is still alive, worked with my father at the International Paper

Company. This connection, then, leads me to the next leg of my journey.

This summer I was able to piece together some of those fragments I've told you about through two powerfully integrating experiences. I had the good fortune to spend some time with Joe Bruchac who cares deeply about the value of stiries and their ability to restore wholeness-- to individuals as well as whole cultures. He has devoted his life and some of his poetry yo telling his own stiry and making sure that his culture, the traditions, the folklore continue to be told. He was interested in my quest and not only spent time talking with me about it, but he also gathered some stories about my father from people who had known him-- a gift which he presented to me one early afternoon in August.

At the end of that month on my birthday, Richard surprised and stunned me with another gift-- that door on which ny father had painted as a young man. After I had received ita and began breathing again, I heard about the long and hard negotiation with the people who now own the farm, which ended in their willingness to part with it-- to open a door which has been closed to me for so long. Yhe gift is most special since, until now, I have had nothing tangible of my father-- no pictures, no letters, no favorite book, the usual things one passes to the next generation for remembering. I have had nothing but the "heap of broken images."

And on this journey, I have learned to listen carefully to the voices that are sometimes hard to hear, that we sometimes overlook. They enrich our contexts and allow us to center ourselves while at the same time direct us to have a broad view.
It is interesting that Caitlin, at age 12 and not living in Corinth, is making a connection that I myself didn't make at the same age while living there. Her map is already more complete than my was at that time.

In our year that lies ahead, there will be many important voices providing maps for our journeys together. We need to listen carefully to them.

Josh Cramer's Chapel, C.A. '92

Wake up and listen up. This is my time. You spend four years here and you'll feel the exact same way. Not that I have that much that is important to discuss, but I am going to talk about what's on my mind today. These thoughts are real and they are mine. That is what separates me from you. My mind. How I think. How I act. How I feel. My quirks. I always wished that I could leap in to someone else's body just to see what made them tick, what they thought about, if I was really different and unique, or if everybody functioned in the same standard manner. We are all different because we were all raised differently. I think the way I do and about what I do because of what previously happened to me. What you experience formulates who you are today, both the good and the bad . Experience a lot, but don't try to rush things. Life is special because the most exciting things happen by chance. I believe that everything is planned out, but I also believe that we can alter our own destinies. I sometimes think that I am a lunatic and evrybody else is normal. I used to think that everybody in the world shared a secret that I alone did not know. Random. Say no to drugs. Don't hate me because I am beautiful. Love your neighbor. Save the whales. Buy one get one free. What crap we are exposed to. Am I the only couch-potatoe vegetable out there? I thought about playing a song now, but decided not to. Love is such a hard word to say. I think that the common cold is psychosematic. Did I spell psychosematic right? You'll never know. Will you know more about me from this chapel? Probably not. People should give other people more of a chance. People should not care what other people think about them. Second opinions are great. Sum up my Concord experience in one word? RIGHT. Red Zinger is great tea. If you make it hot, pour honey in to a big pitcher, add ice, let the ice melt, pour the pitcher in to anotehr pitcher, and then refrigerate that pitcher, you will have one fine ice tea. Why the hell do we work so hard? What do we get out of it? What are our goals? MArtin Luther King said that if you don't have anything to die for, then you aren't worth living. Something to that effect. Find something that you are passionate about, and your life will have meaning. Why does everyone feel that they need to give seniorly advice? Be different. Do you all believe every word that you hear in this chapel and in this school? Maybe we are all lying to you, and force feeding you information

that we want you to know. Every fucking person in the world is an egotist. Don't deny it. If you say that you would die for someone else at any instant, you are lying. Maybe I am lying. Is the past tense of to lie, lay, or lied? I never get that right. What the hell is the difference between affect and effect. I don't think that I really want to know the answers. I hate the word cute. Say it if you mean it. I would if I could but I can't so I won't. Better late than never, but better never late. HeeHaw was my favorite television show when I was younger. I would bounce in front of the T.V. when I was two, tapping every part of my body and hum. That is what true happiness is. When you don't care what people think about you and your actions are all based on instinct. Wouldn't it be great if love was that easy? When was the turning point in our lives when we suddenly gave a shit what people thought about us. Everyone abandons part of themself to conform to what others are like. Role models are great. Don't be afraid to look up to someone. I could have put a short joke right here, but why demoralize myself with a cheap laugh. Don't be afraid to laugh at yourselves. We are all hilarious people. We are all beautiful. We are all ugly. Everything is relative. Could this chapel be considered a poem? Don't be afraid to go to a movie by yourself and have a good time. Wouldn't it be great if static electricity could power the world? Miller Genuine Draft is the best American beer. Never ever eat carmεi on dates. It could unawarely hang from your mouth for hours. Everyone should save a little time each day for themselves. Leisure time is getting shorter and shorter as we approach 2000. I hate waking up to Jordan's furniture commercials. Marshmellow or Doublestuff. Aghhghgh. Clean behind your ears. Comb your hair and brush your teeth. Brush your hair and comb your teeth. You can find meaning in everything. Everything has meaning. Never neglect the obvious. Didn't you ever want to wear your pajamas to school? Could everything in this chapel be a subliminal message? Short guys are sexy. Why do mail-order catalogues invent such ridiculous names for colors? I can't wait until November 11, 2011, because at 11:11 in the afternoon, we will have achieved vertical extacy. Give me a call then. I will almost be 36. I will have a family, be living in suburbia, own a stationwagon, and have two and a half kids. People who came to America to initially escape religious persecution are now the majority in this country and are doing the

persecution. Change is for the better. Censorship sucks. If you don't like what you hear on the radio, then just change the channel. People these days are looking for reasons to be offended. Does this chapel offend you? Live a little. Easier said than done. I don't know who my real friends are. Who will I keep in contact with when I'm outta here? Better yet, who will keep in contact with me? I will without a doubt be back here in five years for my reunion, regardless of where I am or who I am. If you've got it, don't flaunt it, give a little of it to the rest of us. There is a false sense of comfort in this world. The average amount of times that people smile when they don't want to during the day is 19. (fake smile) Did you know that if you flipped the word "New Man" upside down, it would still spell "New Man"? Fingerpainting is fun. Secrets are special. Can passion be defined? Can independent be defined? College applications are pointless. S.A.T.'s suck. I know that in a couple of years, I will have fill-in-the-bubble flashbacks. How come the song "Don't Worry, Be Happy" always puts me in a violent mood. I hate, I hate, I hate whistlers. If we never spoke to strangers, we would all be mutes. If my plane crashed on an uninhabited island far away from any civilization, I'd really be thankful that I brought some bayer aspirin with me. Do people actually go around and ask dentists which kind of gum they prefer? God gave drugs to high-school students because the increased appetite that narcotics cause is great for getting rid of institutional food. Is god male or female? I believe in God. I really do. I think that I need to start praying more. Is praying just a selfish thing to do? When I am really scared and pray to God, I pray on behalf of all the people I love, and not myself. Try not to explain yourself. It's not necessary. Action says much more than words. If a picture tells a thousand words, then why do captions exist? If I hit a pacifist, what would he do? What exactly are hiccups? Try not to sneeze when you are pissing. It hurts. Does that only happen to guys? Gyrate is such an incredible word. Does it translate in to other languages? Why does everything wool have to itch? Eleven O' Clock is so early. I am a night person. Mornings suck. I like the way the Spanish day works with a siesta every mid-afternoon. Why do laws prohibit minors from doing things? I can drive better than most people, I can gamble better than a lot, and I know when to say when. My vote is probably more educated than most of

America's. Then again, who really cares. Adolesence is such a disgusting word. To me, it means not fully developed. I love my family. My dad is 55, and relate's to all of my male problems. My mother, who is 42, helps me with all of my social problems. I am not fair to my parents. I have a hard time opening up to them. I told them not to come to this chapel. I sometimes think that I do not deserve everything that they have given me. My brother is the total opposite of me. He's a sport fanatic who wants to be a veteranarian when he's older. I need to open up to him more too. Be happy with yourself. The Virgin Mary and Jesus have been seen wandering around Long Island. Elvis is still dead.

4/5/92

Josh Famer

Amani Willett's Chapel, Spring 1993

" Hey Amani. why do you always have such a good tan?" Shocked at the nature of the question, I didn't know how to respond. My initial reaction was that of anger, anger and disbelief. "How could anyone be so ignorant, " I thought. I answered the student with the first thing that came to mind. I said, "I can't tell you, it's a family secret." Anger and a feeling of inferiority quickly spread over me and stayed with me for the next couple of days. I became obsessed with the incident , it dictated my each and every thought. There was one word which kept coming back to my mind over and over again; this word was ignorance. As I said, my initial reaction to the incident was that of anger. But now as I look back, I think that I was wrong. I no longer think that anger is the correct response to ignorance or to an ignorant person. Ignorance is defined as being uninformed or resulting from or showing lack of knowledge. I now feel that ignorance must be addressed by informing and teaching, not by anger and reprimanding. If anger is the response, nothing positive will ever come of the experience. Ignorance should in no way be tolerated, but if it is present, it should be corrected and not reprimanded.

The above incident occurred during my sophomore year at CA as did this next incident, which is an excerpt from an essay I wrote for English.

"I think that man is following us," I whispered to Jed. "Don't be so damned paranoid," said Jed as if annoyed. "What would someone be doing following us around Tower Records?" Obviously Jed was right. Why would someone be following us around a record store? Still, I could not rid myself of this eerie sensation., After browsing for a few more minutes, Jed came over to me and whispered, "Amani. you were right, there really is someone following us around the store." Both he and I panicked: we had no idea of what we should do. We definitely did not want to stay in

the store, but we didn't want to leave either because we feared the man might follow us. We elected to stay for fifteen more minutes to see if he would leave. He didn't. Finally I made up my mind, I was going to walk up to the six-foot one, hugely muscled guy and ask him why he and his girlfriend were following us around. When I got the courage and asked him this question, he answered me by pulling out a police badge and said he was an undercover cop named Bill. This, of course, was not the answer that I had been anticipating. Officer Bill informed me that numerous customers had complained to the management, claiming that I was pocketing tapes. This news came as quite a shock to me, because to my knowledge, I had not pocketed anything. I had never stolen anything in my life, and the fact that someone would accuse me of shoplifting hurt me deeply. This incident marked the first time that I had been discriminated against because of my physical appearance. My mother had always warned me that I was at a disadvantage and that I was going to have to watch my back, but these words had no meaning until now. Has anybody out there ever walked into a store and had the security guard follow them around, gotten into an elevator and had the person next to them clutch their handbag a little tighter or had someone cross the street when you walk a little too close to them at night? If any of you have experienced "Funny Vibes," then this next song is for you.

Song: Funny Vibe

I was born on December 15, 1975 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Although I don't remember the few years of my life that I spent there, from what my parents have told me, it was by far the most traumatic period of my life. My father was offered a three year job as a doctor and professor at the university in Dar Es Salaam. Without a second thought, my parents set out on this journey. It was here, late in their second year in the

country that I was born. We would take many trips as a family to game parks and climb mountains such as Mt. Kilimanjaro. One morning after spending the night at a game park, we awoke to the sight of a lion who was poking her head into our tent. Everything was perfect, at least for a little while, but then I got sick. For a couple of days all I could do was cry and cry. Finally my parents took me into the hospital to find out what was wrong with me. The doctors diagnosed me with an intussception and rushed me into surgery immediately. Needless to say, I have no memory of this disaster, but from what my parents have told me, it was not a pretty sight. Just before the doctors took me into the operating room, they asked my parents to join them as they prayed for my life. The doctors figured that this was the best way, if not the only way to assure my getting well. A couple of days later, while I was still in the hospital, I needed an I.V. to be stuck into my head for some reason. The doctors couldn't perform this task, so my father ended up being the one who did the job. By this point my mother was going absolutely crazy. But as you can see, I recovered just fine. Six months later I got the symptoms again, this time we left for the United States immediately. Although I can't recall these events from memory, I still think that in many ways my time in Africa has had the most bearing upon my life. Whenever I feel mad, sad, angry, enraged of that life just sucks, I think back on this time when I came so close to death and it really puts things into perspective.

From Tanzania I moved to Cambridge, Mass where I have lived ever since. I went to Cambridge public school from kindergarten until eighth grade and then decided to try my hand at private school. I arrived at Concord in the fall of 1989 as a totally out of place freshman. There are many aspects of CA that I don't like, but I think that my experience here has turned out to be a positive one on the whole. As odd as it may seem, I have found that many of my bad experiences here have been more important and more beneficial to me than some of my better ones. I think that this is because CA has made me realize, confront and sort out a lot of problems, at least in my own mind.

Classifications by race are all too prevalent at Concord. I have never encountered a place where people are so quick to assume things about one another. It seems that students assume that everybody in the white community is wealthy, intelligent and owns a house somewhere in the suburbs and that all the students in the black community are on full scholarship, are intellectually inferior, are from the inner-city and listen solely to rap music. For my entire first year at CA I felt trapped somewhere in between. I'm not incredibly wealthy and I don't live in the suburbs, yet at the same time I'm not from the inner-city and I didn't like rap music. The white kids couldn't figure me out because I didn't fit the mold of what they thought a black kid ought to be and the black kids thought that I fit the mold of a white person a bit too much. I was caught in between the two extremes and I was damn confused.

My experience before Concord had been one of rich cultural diversity, my classes were full of people from a plethora of cultural and ethnic backgrounds who were excited to learn as much as they possibly could about each other before they moved on in life. I took this experience, that I now realize as quite authentic, for granted. It took a school such as CA to make me realize how special my early school years really were.

Song: History Lesson

<u>Diversity at Concord</u>

Diversity at Concord is definitely a controversial topic and I can honestly say that I don't think that we talk about it too much. After all, not much has changed over my four years here. I just think that the approach has to be re-examined. I have given much thought to diversity, and after hours of sorting it out in my mind, I have a fairly clear idea of where I stand. First of all, it scares me that the student body grows so quickly tired of the issue. Do you care? You can't expect the administration to deal

with the problem single handedly; it really is not that easy. Nothing will ever be accomplished if the students don't give a shit. Secondly, the faculty and administration have to begin thinking of alternate solutions to the problem; what's been done thus far has obviously not worked effectively. For one, the faculty must start to think of new ways of diversifying their curricula. For example, Freshman English, a required course, definitely needs some help. A Raisin in the Sun and Their Eyes Are Watching are read, and this is a good start. However, both of these books are crammed in at the end of the course right before exams. The impression that one carries away from the course is that these books and the cultures represented are not as important or significant as the other material covered in the course.

Secondly, although the Admissions Committee and all of its board members are totally qualified, the committee needs to be remade. There is a lack of representation and perspective of minority voices that need to be heard. As it stands, there are too few minorities on the permanent Admissions board. Each year two students are elected to sit on the board as well. last year approximately 25 students applied for the position, many of which were qualified minority students. The two students that were chosen, were not only male, but were both white males representing a fairly conservative stance here at Concord. And the school still wonders why it isn't an ethnic haven.

Friends: This next song is for my brother Noah and all my other friends. I love you all. And oh yeah, the Rolling Stones suck!

Noah: You have been like a brother to me these last three years. I'll never forget having to run back from Brigham's every time we eat ice cream. We have been through a lot. I've never opened up to anyone like I have opened up to you. Noah, this song is for you and all my . . . [The copy of Amani's chapel that I have ends here.]

My Chapel!

Good morning, my name is Peter Mudd and this is my chapel!

I remember my friend Tan, on my first day of 5th grade, ask the teacher if he could sit somewhere else because I was laughing too much and it made him nervous. At the beginning of this year I was told by a friend that one of Mark Lu's biggest fears about his chapel was that I'd be the only one laughing. I've always laughed a lot, ever since I was little, and even before I came to CA I had acquired quite a reputation for laughing at almost anything. But I'd never really thought about it before - then one day sophomore year Parkman paused for a moment in the middle of class to explained to everyone that the reason I was always laughing was because I had no real idea who I was, yet. Needless to say, this unexpected insight launched me into a massive anxiety attack filled with self doubt and insecurities. I looked around the room and not knowing exactly what to do I gave a nervous little ha.

As I said, I've always laughed a lot. I've always cried a lot too. I tend to get taken away by my emotions. I love to feel intensities, if I feel something I usually react, and I've always gone for extremes. I love tearing down dark streets at night with music blasting in my ear and my friends by my side - standing up, out of the sun roof with the wind in my face thinking, "How can it get any better then this?!?" If I'm happy its always easy to tell, I'm usually smiling, talking loud and trying to be funny. If I'm sad, I'm quiet and closed up. And if I'm arguing a point, I tend to be out of my chair, in somebody's face and very stubborn. But I like it. It gives my

life variety. Who ever else is in the room usually gets a taste of my variety too.

I wasn't always this eccentric, nor am I now witheveryone. I seem to adapt to the people I'm with, toning it down for particular audiences, BUT the slightest push from someone spasy and I'm gone! As I said, I'm not like this with everyone and I wasn't always this way.

I remember arriving, a shy nerdy little eighth grader, for my tour. I had just left a visit to Commonwealth with tears in my eyes a few days earlier scared to death that that was what all private schools were like! I was toured by Owen Bush and the only two classes he didn't bum me off on someone else for were taught by Derek Nelson. Theater and English. Two things I never went near!

This was my first experience of Concord and I will never forget it. Owen was exciting! He was always doing something crazy or talking with one or all of the many faces we passed in the halls. Everyone seemed to be friends. And the teacher, Derek, pulled me out of my seat in the PAC and got me to join in with the warm ups for his theater class. This was WILD! When I went for my interview with Ted Scott I found myself talking! WOW! He was interested and I was having a ball! I, obviously liked it more than Commonwealth.

The most incredible thing about Concord has been that it came through for me! It engaged me in a way I had never known before. It gave me opportunities I might never have had, allowing me to learn from a community of truly extraordinary people, and has opened doors for me in genuine ways. Looking back I can hardly believe the number and intensity of things I've been exposed to. I've had the chance to do Macbeth, to be in the dance company, the chorus, to make films, and to be called a ruffian by Ms. Nunes! My friends and teachers here at CA have made and been this experience for me. I will never forget any of you!

But I am afraid that we are endanger of loosing something. Of loosing what I fell in love with. Of loosing what makes CA so special. And I think that if people don't see this then we are in trouble.

I see two things that I feel we need to address.

Concord has changed from four years ago. I knoweverything changes, teachers leave and new ones come, classes graduate and new kids take their places, but an attitude has also changed. It has changed on both the sides of the students, and the administration and is now tumbling out of control one feeding off of the other getting worse and worse. I'm not exactly sure where it started, how or with whom, or what the answers are, but both sides, the students and the administration, are going to need to give and work together if we are going to control and stop it.

First the Administration: (and the examples I will use all have exceptions, conditions, and reasons - in other words, I don't claim them to be perfect or as one-sided as they may come out to be)

True, I was not in the senior class last year or the years before, but I cannot imagine that so many questions arose concerning the need or appropriate nature of many senior or school activities, which I now hesitate to call traditions, as there were this year.

Examples: After the content and execution of chapels we lived through my first few years here at CA I found the ruckus raised by Sam Renold and William Ng's chapels to be unfair, unwarranted, and ridicules! Why this year was the public humiliation of underclassmen who walked on senior steps found unsuitable? Correct me if I'm wrong but hasn't that happened many times a year for the last three years? And I admit it was rude and went a little too far, but don't I remember something about a freshmen of the month club three years ago? I mention these examples not because I agree with them but to say GIVE ME A

BREAK! Look at the things that are being questioned now, and look at them in comparison to what used to happen.

Before this year I remember policy being one hour of work jobs after three cuts, now it is two hours of work jobs for cutting a single assembly, class, or chapel. I ask myself, "why do we want students to attend assemblies, classes, and chapels anyway?" And why aren't they going? Forcing them to go to assemblies is NOT going to solve the real problem!

Making attendance to an Outside Inside Dance Performance mandatory for boarders and locking them out of dorms during a campus weekend is NOT going to raise an appreciation for dance, or a growth in community spirit! It will only make people mad!

These few examples only demonstrate to me that the administration is growing incredible out of touch with students! Is CA getting too large to pay attention to individual students and individual incidence? Are we going to become all policy and form letters? This upsets me tremendously!

Concord is such an exceptional school! I believe in it and I love it! That is why this upsets me as much as it does.

Now for students: (keep in mind that their are exceptions and reasons for each example.)

I have notices a general lack of respect for teachers. We tend, especially us seniors looking for that mythical thing called senior spring, to forget why we are here, and what makes it possible(and I'm not talking about our parents money). The teachers here work damn hard for us and we need to respect and recognize that! They deserve it! If we are asked to do something we should respect that. They do have a little more experience than we do.

Never before have I seen such open competition in I don't know what between students. In all school meetings and announcements the rivalry between the juniors and seniors is terrible. I certainly have a bias, being in the coolest group on

campus, the unsensitive, macho, male, seniors, but what is this crap about being "cooler" than we are. There is a natural hierarchy and it is being bypassed. You will get your turn, believe me! But this competition is senseless and rude. And never before have I seen so few ring begs! Ever! I think that says a lot.

I have heard that students are cutting many more assemblies, classes, and chapels then ever before. Again we are forgetting why we are here.

Both sides are going to NEED to give on these and allissues if an agreement is to be reached. My words to the students are: That we should grow up a little and realize why we are here and who makes it possible. My words to the administration are this: You can't be open, nurturing, and encouraging to students on one hand and then treat us as irresponsible, unthinking, uncaring children on the other! Or that is exactly what you will get.

This brings me to my second point.

Concord is so rich with opportunity, and there is no way of adding it all up. We as students and teachers are pushed, in some cases, beyond human limits. Keep in mind that much of this pushing is personal, but Concord doesn't have a system of sorting out what is possible for students or teachers. We as students are asked to extend ourselves but there is NO institutional allowance for error. It is like a guillotine. I say institutional because there are many teachers who do understand when problems arise. When I say understand I don't mean that they offer exceptions, but only simple understanding. And in many cases that is all we ask. To me that means much more than any grade I could ever get.

Much of the over extension is put upon us by ourselves. I know it was in my case. But there still is no system to help us sort out what is possible. I can think of an example in my life. I, like many students, had loaded my schedule up to the

tilting point. Mine with dance, dance company, and theater - all of which I love and really wanted to do. God knows my advisor tried to talk me out of it. But they were demanding and time consuming. When it finally came to the end of the dance performances I was relieved and almost burnt out completely. We were then asked by the administration to do an extra performance for the alumni. This performance,. among being scheduled late on the Sunday everyone was leaving so there were hardly any people there, contributed to pushing me over the edge. I was out of school for about one week. When I came back I had a cut slip in my box for one class out of that week I was absent - it was an admitted mistake. But without investigate of my specific case, a form letter was sent to my advisor and parents stating that I had skipped a class and that Iwould have to report for work jobs and that this was exactly the kind of thing that was hurting CA. This type of response totally bypasses the student allows no room for error.

I find a comparison in my mind between the choice to increase the punishment of students to try and regain control and the question that arose last year about the need for locks on dorm room doors and cubbies. Both, I will argue, go against everything CA is about and stands for. The prospect of locks on the school was horrible in my eyes. I argued that it would destroy everything CA was about. Sure common trust doesn't work all the time, but if we give up on it we give up on CA! There will be times when more things will be stolen, and we will deal with it together. It took a lot on the parts of the students who had things taken to continue with the system, but that type of personal sacrifice and giving is exactly what is needed now to keep CA alive. By opting to deal with these problems through added punishment rather than looking at the problems and giving a little by realizing there will be phases where more people will be cutting etc. . . the administration is giving up on the students. It has let us down! They have opted for what should

be a last resort. This to me is blatant hypocrisy. This shows me that Concord can ask of its students all it wants but doesn't show the same in return.

I don't expect this chapel to change anything. I only want you to think about what you as students and faculty and administrators really want from this school. The special place it really should be, or a buisness concerned with policy and rules, because that is where it is heading.

I would like to thank again the teachers who are responsible for making this such a special place, and who are doing all they can on a personal level, in their classes, to maintain that standard. We apretiate you.

And finally I dedicate this song to the underclassmen, CA is yours now, Enjoy!

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